

Call-for-Papers
“Challenging Development: Concepts, Visions, Perspectives”

April 16 - 18, 2009
Jugendgästehaus Bielefeld, Germany

Since the late 1970s the discourse on development has seen a remarkable diversification. Initial paradigms, models, and concepts concentrated on the controversy within the developmental mainstream and on how to best achieve economic growth. During the last decades several conceptual shifts have enabled an unsettling or a partial questioning of the old developmental telos which is present even in 'dependencia' and 'alternative' schools of thought. The post-modern perspective marked by the end of grand theories also proposed a new era in development theory and practice, a time in which the hegemony of modernisation theory in its various guises gives way to a diverse multiplicity of approaches to development. The meaning, aims, and politics of development are and will remain challenged and contested. These controversies are debated mainly in academia, but they create new challenges for developmental policies, above all to integrate conceptual shifts in development studies into policy formulation in a meaningful and coherent way. Although the growing diversity of development discourses complicates clear-cut conceptual thinking, it also creates an enabling space for innovative approaches and perspectives. In this regard, this conference seeks to highlight the policy relevance of analyses that are **“Challenging Development”** to create new insights into its divergent **Concepts, Visions** and **Perspectives**.

Discovering the significance and transformative powers of globalisation processes in particular has reinforced new ways and modes of conceptualising development. Today, we understand development as a central issue in world society which is strongly linked with approaches to global governance and global structural policies. The urgency to develop appropriate tools and policies becomes particularly evident when we look at public and political discussions about the global food crisis, climate change, global migration or disasters. The formerly hegemonic approach centring on economic policy reforms is no longer seen as a universally redemptive strategy for accelerated and sustainable development. Development is rather viewed as a multilayered concept shaped and perpetually reconfigured by the interactions between international governmental and non-governmental organisations, national governments and ministries, as well as grassroots organisations and local people who negotiate related concepts, approaches, and visions. Our aim is to understand the gaps, cleavages, and conflicts emerging from the multiple and diverse negotiation processes and to integrate the different perspectives into theory and conceptual formulation.

In this respect, the conference aims to bring together scholars from different disciplines such as historical science, political science, sociology, social anthropology to shed light on

conceptual challenges as well as on innovative approaches to researching development processes, analysing resulting changes, creating theoretical assumptions, and formulating policies. Paper proposals should ideally address one or more of the four different areas defined below. However, we also welcome interesting proposals related to the overall topic which go beyond this preliminary framework.

1. Development and World Society

Approaches to development are facing new challenges after the end of the Cold War and 9/11. Against the background of these political landmarks, development is increasingly perceived and conceptualised as a global issue which is not only relevant for interstate relations, but a matter of/in world society. This area of the conference seeks to unravel the various notions, and perspectives on development on a rather theoretical level and intends to investigate how these notions frame and transform development policies. We look for contributions which analyse the shifting semantics of development in world society, but also for perspectives on development as comprehensive processes of social change. Therefore we are in particular interested in historical, political, and sociological contributions discussing whether, how, and to what extent the concepts of development changed over the past decades and what consequences derive from these changes. One interesting field could be processes of mainstreaming in development policy and practice, of, for example, gendered approaches, environmental issues, or conflict prevention. Another important issue is related to the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) as the new global tool for targeting poverty alleviation. We aim to understand the effects and significance of the new global approaches for the concept of development as such. This might include questioning the extent to which the formulation of the MDGs really creates new opportunity structures to demand sustained commitment of resources to developmental goals previously agreed upon or whether it is merely a discursive packaging with little impact on poverty alleviation.

2. Development, Power and Structuration

Critical perspectives have long pointed to the crucial role that power and hegemony play in determining the theory and practice of global development. Discursive approaches inspired by French post-structuralism in particular have attempted to deconstruct development. This school of thought commonly described as post-development has been criticised, but more nuanced post-developmental analysis that differentiated itself from a simple, homogenising ideological anti-development critique was able to provide fresh accounts of regimes of knowledge/power in development discourses. New scholarship seeks to bridge the divide by applying post-developmental insights to devise innovative field research and advocacy that creates policy recommendations without compromising the awareness of positionality and unequal knowledge/power relations in which both the researcher and development interventions are embedded. Postcolonial modes of inquiry have highlighted the complex constructions of subjectivities and societies in and through development – a discourse and practice with marked departures, but also with trajectories from colonial discourses. While the potential of post-colonial perspectives for interrogating development has been acknowledged, further conceptualisation and operationalisation of post-colonial theoretical approaches for empirical research in the field of development remain to be necessary. Such practicalisation could serve to illuminate the tensions as well as the interdependencies between the supposedly more/less advanced, between technocratic expertise and indigenous knowledge, as well as between divergent gendered orders and social formations. These are all bound up with each other through concepts and practices as well as power relations and identity constructions mediated by development. We encourage contributions deploying or critically engaging such approaches.

3. Translocal Perspectives on Development

Development is a global phenomenon, structuring and structured by the dynamics of globalisation. This results in a diversification of development actors and approaches and creates new challenges for methodology in development research and analysis. Different ways of conceptualising translocal dimensions in development research can be considered



as fruitful, e.g. the perspective on actor constellations and the formation of translocal spaces which can be analysed at knowledge interfaces. Other options are transcultural comparison, multi-level and multi-dimensional analysis, and global ethnography. We seek contributions proposing innovative ways for the understanding of development as a process of social change and transformation negotiated in translocal spaces. In particular, we look for research on border-crossing dimensions and/or localisation processes which contributes to empirically grounded theory construction. This can, for example, focus on relationship between migration and/or diasporisation and development. Recent research has highlighted that migrants and returnees can be significant development actors. But it remains still unclear, however, how exactly migrants contribute to local development processes, what kinds of visions they bring with them, how they correspond to local actors or not and how development is negotiated at different translocal interfaces. Moreover, empirical perspectives on the interaction and negotiation between migrants and other development actors are still lacking. We are interested in innovative approaches conceptualising the multi-dimensional aspects of interaction across space and time shaping the dynamics of the development-globalisation-nexus.

4. Development(s) in Organisations and Institutions

Different organisations have contributed to the conceptual understanding of development, developmental policy and practice. First, there are international governmental organisations (IGOs) like the World Bank, OECD, IMF, UN Organisations, which develop and promote developmental policies and strategies. Secondly, there are international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) which promote and seek to implement their own conceptions of development while to a certain extent attempting to make use of IGOs as arenas to present and foster their ideas. We are interested in empirical research focussing on those processes that generate new policies and ideas in and through IGOs and/or INGOs and their cooperation. IGOs and INGOs are important players in developmental policy, but they are not monolithic actors. Yet, the multiplicity of approaches within such institutions is rarely examined. We are interested in contributions that seek to unpack this black box and provide insight into these institutions' internal politics and the way they manage their internal dialogue about the aims and direction, as well as the legitimacy and the feasibility of developmental interventions. Which outside actors influence the internal debate? Whose perspectives and interests are given prevalence in internal negotiations? How are divergent policy priorities such as gender perspectives, concepts of sustainability, and the migration-development nexus negotiated, prioritised, and mainstreamed in institutional developmental policy formulations? Which opportunity structures are created and used by external actors to strengthen their perspective on development within IGOs and INGOs? Furthermore, these strategies are spread worldwide, adopted and transformed through different processes of dissemination, acceptance, and internalisation. This "travel of ideas" can be researched—either from an institutionalist point of view or by focusing on knowledge and negotiations. We are looking for explicitly empirical trajectories to both.

Interested researchers should submit a paper proposal of no more than 400 words and a CV in a single word- or pdf-file. The deadline for submission is 7 December 2008. Decisions on the acceptance of proposals will be made until 18 December 2008.

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The Conference will take place at Jugendgästehaus Bielefeld (<http://www.lvb.westfalen.jugendherberge.de/bielefeld/>). Travel expenses and accommodation costs can be, if required, covered by the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology (BGHS).

