

## Preface

### Development and Cooperation at a Crossroads: Between shattered dreams and a just world

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It is an honor to offer some words of reflection on development and cooperation to a class that I trust will make a difference in the field. My comments are inspired by their valuable work collected in this book, the first that the Program of Development and Cooperation at Universitat Internacional de Calalunya, with which I have had the pleasure of collaborating, produces.

The book opens up with Ngulube's valuable questioning of the developmental paradigm. He draws examples from his professional and life experience in Africa to illuminate the self-perpetuating paradox of actually-existing developmental programs, plans, and actions that, when deployed upon African contexts in a top-down, ethnocentric fashion, have produced greater dependency and poverty, calling in turn for more developmental interventions. His critical engagement with developmental theory—including post-developmental, post-colonial, and post-structural approaches—leads him to tentatively formulate “self-improvement” as an alternative approach to current development practices. While more effort would need to be put into the elucidation of such alternative, Ngulube has made a commendable start here. The greatest challenge would persist to be implementation of any such alternatives, bridging the seemingly widening gap between knowledge and action in a world of conflicting global politics. Hopefully, we can trust the group of young scholars/professionals who write in this book to do their part in the struggle.

When we think of “divided cities” we tend to concentrate on post-conflict societies, such as with the case of Beirut or Ramallah, examined by Kassab and Aruri in this book, respectively. The fact of the matter is, however, that the dynamics of capitalism, and most particularly neoliberalism, has exacerbated divisions in most cities around the world. Kassab is right to suggest that a cosmopolitan approach to development could produce healing and re-establish solidarity across cultural differences. This should urge greater emphasis on the inclusion of curricular reform to expand and train cultural literacy in development and cooperation professionals. Awareness and attention to multiculturalism, however, should not jeopardize understanding of the fact that different minoritized and disenfranchised populations experien-

ce oppression in different ways and should be distinctively planned for/with accordingly .

According to Aruri, Ramallah is torn between the tensions and imperatives produced by a colonial regime, on the one hand, and a neoliberal regime, on the other. Once more, as Kassab discussed for Beirut's revitalization programs, the agendas of foreign-aid-led development in Ramallah are more responsive to international donors and imperatives than to the local needs, producing sociospatial de-formations. If developmental practices have used the “warfare tools” of planning and architecture to alter the landscape of Israel/Palestine, however, communal resistance is always present, with individuals and collectives acquiring and deploying different tactics depending on resources, cultural norms, and political opportunities and constraints. A great challenge for development and cooperation professionals is to approach, acknowledge, and give room to those practices on the ground that denounce injustices and offer more equitable development. They also need to infiltrate and transform international development and cooperation institutions so that they become more amenable to facilitate this work.

Govers exposes the fact that, for foreign agents and forces to exert effective developmental pressures upon particular communities and places, they need local mediating forces. His analysis reveals the complicity of local government and planning institutions in Barcelona with both national interests to expand the global prominence of the city and international interests to participate in the economic gains of the enterprise. This complicity have prompted local decision-makers to omit appreciation for and discussion of the relevance of preservation of social capital, networks, and institutions, as well as historic preservation of a unique, working-class neighborhood typology in the city when advocating for the “urban renewal” project of the historic neighborhood Bon Pastor. Similarly worrisome is the paternalistic and condescending explanations offered to the local community, exclusively focusing on the alleged benefits of the physical transformation of the neighborhood while strategically omitting the larger context of city and regional transformations that this urban renewal scheme was part of. In view of this case, how can a planner become more responsive to local needs while productively mediating glocal forces? Govers argues for more balanced approaches to urban transformations that give greater weight to consideration of the linkages between social heritage and spatial identity, as well as to the potential disruptions and traumas that may ensue from their disregard.

Referring to disaster-prone areas in Bangladesh, Rahman tackles some of

the greatest planning challenges of our time: disaster prevention, preparedness and response; climate disruption mitigation and adaptation; food security; and community participation. He manages to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches for the elaboration of community risk assessments, vulnerability mapping, coastal community resilience models, and multi-stakeholders' participation methods. From his multifolded and sophisticated analysis, a series of strategies are suggested for ensuring food security in coastal areas of Bangladesh. Inasmuch as the country mobilizes the political will and resources needed for the implementation of Rahman's recommendations, it will be addressing one of the world's areas in most severe and urgent need of climate adaptation initiatives. As these challenges are and will be present in other parts of the world, Bangladesh could turn into a reference.

Also in relation to disaster risk reduction, Castelao examines the main causes of the high level of vulnerability that informal communities usually face. She notices that organizations and institutions working in risk reduction are few, usually use uniform solutions, and rarely take into account local strategies that communities develop to cope with risk. She advocates for a greater attention to the specificities of communities to understand their vulnerabilities and risks, but also the strategies that can be culturally fit and hence ultimately effective and sustainable for risk management.

Minchin explores the potential role of technological transfers for enhancing sustainable development projects in a post-connected state. He is urging us to tap into new opportunities for empowerment, welfare generation, and cooperation that can be derived from a conversation between the innovators of Indigenous Technical Knowledges (ITK). In his particular proposal, he envisions a 'post-connected' future web application that couples regional ecological information with the locations of innovators and technologies. This knowledge-sharing repository would list technologies and innovators referencing regional ecological information through geographical indicators. In this way, regionalized collaborations between innovators could enhance ecologically appropriate technological development. While the web-based prototype of this proposal is not fully developed, Minchin's work calls attention to the central role that freer technology diffusions and transfers can play in expanding more democratic, cost-effective, and environmentally-friendly technology innovation, adoption, and adaptation.

Through an example in healthcare Architecture, Swan discusses Evidence Based Design as a methodology that can be used in cooperation projects to facilitate and harness dialogues between multiple stakeholders. The me-

thodology borrows terminology and ideas from several disciplines including Environmental Psychology, Architecture, Neuroscience and Behavioral Economics. The case study illustrates the frequent need for the adoption of multipronged analytical and participatory tools in the field of development and cooperation, which is multidisciplinary by nature. This realization also stresses the need for professionals in the field to constantly strive to further educate themselves for the expansion of their analytical and technical skills.

Evidently, the collection offers multiple entry points to relevant and timely reflections on development and cooperation. It opens more questions than it provides answers for. But in the convoluted and rapidly transformed world of international development and cooperation, it could not have been otherwise. This book is an important contribution to a field of studies that demands more scrutiny and commitment from scholars, professionals, and policymakers alike. It also speaks of a Program of Development and Cooperation's coming of age at Universitat Internacional de Catalunya. We should expect—demand, really—continuous and greater things to come from the Program, and not the least from the impacts in practice of its young graduates transforming development and cooperation as we know it.



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