

NCCR North-South newsletter

Research Partnerships for Sustainable Development

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LIVELIHOODS AND GLOBALISATION

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Focus on Livelihoods and Globalisation



Photo: U. Höggel

Making a Living in the Globalised World

While governments and international organisations compete for headlines, pledging renewed efforts to combat global warming and meet the United Nations Millennium Development goals, the worlds' poor face a more pressing concern: making a living.

The day-to-day struggle to stay alive, feed the family and construct a future worth looking forward to, is not something that can be put off while relevant scientific data are being collected. The effects of globalisation on the lives of migrant workers in Nepal, coffee growers in Ethiopia, livestock farmers in Kyrgyzstan, and slum dwellers in Mexico City are real and immediate.

What exactly are the effects of globalisation? How are they being dealt with? Are there better ways? These are questions the NCCR North-South addresses in research aimed at finding practical strategies for assuring sustainable livelihoods as globalisation reshapes the developing world.

Photo: NCCR North-South



Editorial



Prof. Dr. Hans Hurni
Director
NCCR North-South

During the past few years there has been a great deal of discussion, both in Switzerland and around the world, concerning the usefulness and efficiency of development cooperation. The debate is important and should not be shirked by researchers dealing with the impacts of so-called *global change* – i.e. economic, environmental and socio-cultural dynamics at the global level – on local populations in developing countries.

The NCCR North-South research presented in this issue has focused intensely on working with local communities to detect endogenous potentials for more sustainable development. Researchers have focused on people's livelihood strategies in rural and urban areas where major problems seem to make it unlikely that the development community can help make a change simply through external support.

After circulating internal newsletters since the inception of the NCCR North-South in 2001, we have decided to launch a Newsletter presenting results on specific themes for wider distribution; this new series supplements the programme's website.

NCCR North-South News and Events

International Conference on Research for Development

2-4 July 2008, University of Bern, Switzerland

The NCCR North-South is holding an International Conference on Research for Development (ICRD 2008) from 2-4 July 2008 in Bern, Switzerland. Speakers at the conference include experts on issues ranging from health and sanitation to natural resource management, livelihoods and governance.

For further details, please visit the conference website at <http://icrd.unibe.ch>

NCCR North-South Alumni Network

The NCCR North-South has launched its Alumni network. Members of the NCCR North-South programme who had completed their PhD by December 2007 can update their profiles via the website www.north-south.unibe.ch. Members may upload their CV and publications; and they can access former colleagues' profiles and addresses as well as the programme's institutional network.



The Graduate Institute, Geneva, Switzerland

Geneva has a new institution: the Graduate Institute. It's the result of the merger of two academic institutions specialised in international relations and development studies.

Its full name is the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, and it gives selected students from all over the world the opportunity for graduate, disciplinary and multidisciplinary studies that will allow them to play a significant role in international cooperation and development. <http://graduateinstitute.ch/>

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Competing for Access to the Forests of Pakistan

Pakistan has one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world. The common assumption is that this is the result of overuse by the local population. In Pakistan's mountain regions, people are dependent on timber as their main source of fuel. The forests also provide fodder for livestock and the principal material for the construction of houses. In addition, farmers attempting to increase the amount of land available for cultivation are often tempted to push back the edges of forests. In order to counter these practices, the government of Pakistan has adopted a number of measures ostensibly aimed at protecting the forests by severely restricting private access to them.



Photo: U. Geiser

Research supported by the NCCR North-South has confirmed that the basic assumption underlying this policy is erroneous. In fact, the most important factor currently contributing to deforestation in Pakistan is the organised, illegal exploitation of the forests by a "timber mafia" whose access to them remains largely unimpeded.

While this is widely known to the local population, it has not yet had an impact on government policies. These are based on the recommendations of international development organisations that emphasise the use of "Participatory Forest Management" as a means of combating deforestation in Pakistan: educating the local population as to the importance of preserving the forests and including them in efforts to do so.

In light of the findings of NCCR North-South researchers, the failure of the Participatory Forest Management programs to slow down the process of deforestation in Pakistan is not surprising. Equally understandable is the continued mistrust of the local population as to the intent and efficacy of these programs. Scientifically gathered evidence in support of the local farmers' position, it is hoped, can

help lead the way to the adoption of a more realistic approach to the problem.

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The Transnational Family: Migration Survival Strategies

Studies conducted by NCCR North-South researchers in one of the most remote areas of western Nepal confirm that migration has become one of the mainstays of survival for rural villages where agriculture no longer suffices for supporting a family. The migrants are generally young men who leave to look for work in neighbouring India, or further away, in Malaysia or the countries of the Persian Gulf. To finance the voyage they are often obliged to take loans from relatives. Once they find work, they send the greater part of their wages back to their villages, to pay back the loans and support the families they left behind. Wives



Photo: U. Müller-Böker

have no choice but to cope as best they can with maintaining the land, raising the children and caring for parents in circumstances that grow more and more precarious from year to year. In addition to analysing the social consequences of these changes, NCCR North-South research also focuses on strategies for helping the migrants come to terms with their situation and improving the efficiency of the livelihood strategies they have adopted.

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Combating Urban Exclusion

The global tide of urbanisation has led to increased competition between expanding metropolitan cities eager to enhance their economic base. In many cases this results almost inevitably in increased exclusivity: low-income populations are forced to the periphery as rising costs make it impossible for them to remain in the cities and live in a reasonably dignified manner.

While this phenomenon is known also in the North, it is a trend even more pronounced in the South. Here the segregation of the rich from the poor is often both more formal and more strict - taking the form of gated communities and restricted areas and reinforced by the imposition of tolls and other official and unofficial sanctions. Rather than removing borders, globalisation processes often only shift them - removing boundaries between countries while creating new ones within cities.

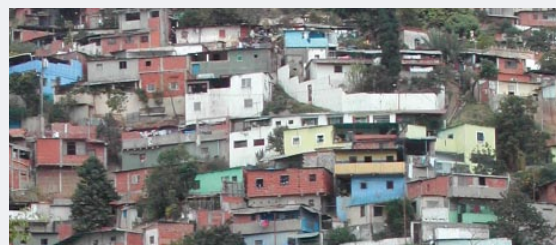


Photo: LaSUR

One of the outcomes of these fragmentation and segregation processes is an increase in violence both as a means crossing boundaries, but also as a "by-product" of globalised cities.

What are the possibilities for reversing this trend? Can urban development be steered in a direction allowing for wider social diversity? What are the policies needed to ensure that the poor also benefit as the services and infrastructure of a city improve? What are the chances for people to triumph over social inequalities?

Case studies that address these questions are currently being carried out by NCCR North-South researchers in Hanoi, La Paz, Mexico City and Tegucigalpa. Findings thus far indicate that the mobilisation and active participation of the population groups concerned are key factors in determining urban development policies. An understanding of the role of providing livelihood opportunities for the poor is an essential element in determining policies likely to succeed at creating socially diverse urban habitats.

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NCCR North-South research on Livelihoods and Globalisation is conducted within the framework of a work package under the direction of Ulrike Müller-Böker (left) of the **Development Study Group (DSGZ)** at the University of Zurich's Institute of Geography, and Adriana Rabinovich (right) of the **Laboratory of Urban Sociology (LaSUR)** Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (EPFL) in Lausanne



Innovations in Decision Making Processes for Sustainable Urban Projects

The rapid growth of cities throughout the world over the past decades has had a number of undesired social, economic and ecological effects. The impact of this phenomenon has reached dramatic proportions in the cities of the South, where often even the most basic needs of the inhabitants are not being met. There is an urgent imperative to bring this urban “evolution” under control: to mitigate the negative effects of urbanisation, while developing more fully its positive potential.

Over the past thirty to forty years, the rehabilitation of existing cities has become an issue of priority on the public agenda. Traditional approaches to urban planning – typically resulting in technocratic “top-down” policies – have proved inadequate for addressing this challenge. In response, new instruments of urban intervention have emerged. These are innovative processes, which are characterised by a heightened sensitivity to the need for sustainability.

To this end they generally advocate a participatory approach designed to take into account the needs and interests of various stakeholders – in particular, those of the inhabitants. The question is: how successful is this approach. Is it suited to dealing with the complex realities of the urban context? How do decision-making processes deal with a diversity of development logics?

With these questions in mind, the NCCR North-South conducts comparative research based on case studies in Havana, Buenos Aires and Bangkok. The studies focus on recent projects for the rehabilitation of historic city centres considered of value as cultural heritage. The aim of the projects is to preserve the historic substance of the neighbourhoods while maintaining their viability as a habitat for the poor. Preliminary findings show that rehabilitation projects, whether conducted with international cooperation or under local government supervision, often run the risk of being “too successful” in the long term. As the quality of the buildings and the infrastructures improves, these centrally located city neighbourhoods gain in attractiveness for private investors. The original residents most often lack the financial means to resist market pressures and are



Photo: LaSUR

forced to leave. As a number of case studies have shown, however, these pressures can be countered through concerted efforts based on community action in coordination with both local and national public policy.

These innovative processes, which aim for sustainability within the urban context, attempt to identify combinations of economic, environmental and social factors relevant for the design of policies that can meet the interests and needs of a wide variety of urban actors.

To the extent to which such approaches are successful is, in many cases, still very difficult to assess. Moreover, even if certain “best practices” do prove effective in one urban context, the fundamental question as to whether the successful results achieved in one city can be replicated elsewhere still requires further investigation.

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NCCR North-South Recommended Reading

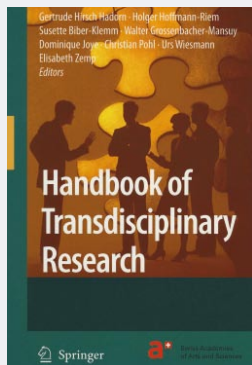


Principles for Designing Transdisciplinary Research

by Christian Pohl and Gertrude Hirsch Hadorn

München: oekom verlag, 2007

In the information or knowledge society, there is a need for transdisciplinary research, i.e. research that deals with complex life-world problems. Transdisciplinary projects aim to come up with practice-oriented solutions that serve what is perceived to be the common good. In order to achieve this, they transcend disciplinary boundaries and include the perspectives of public agencies, the business community and civil society in the research process. This book lays out the principles to be taken into account when dealing with this challenging process.



Handbook of Transdisciplinary Research

Edited by Gertrude Hirsch Hadorn, Holger Hoffmann-Riem, Susette Biber-Klemm, Walter Grossenbacher-Mansuy, Dominique Joye, Christian Pohl, Urs Wiesmann and Elisabeth Zemp

Berlin: Springer Science + Business Media B.V., 2008

This handbook provides, for the first time, a structured overview of experience gained in addressing issues such as global and local environmental concerns, migration, new technologies, public health, and socio-cultural change. Referring to the 21 projects presented, cross-cutting challenges of transdisciplinary research are discussed, among which participation, values and uncertainties.

Completed PhD Theses with a Livelihood Focus

A collaborative monitoring concept for developing cities: methodological approach and construction of an urban observatory [in French]

Repetti, Alexandre; Burkina Faso, Senegal

Land use changes and transnational migration: the impact of remittances in Western Mexico

Hostettler, Silvia; Mexico

Urban borderland intermediation in the Dominican Republic: three case studies

Dilla, Haroldo Alfonso; Dominican Republic

Integrated water resources management: limitations and potential in the Municipality of El Grullo, Mexico

André de la Porte, Cheryl; Mexico

Border cities and space transformation: Haiti and the Dominican Republic [in French]

Poschet, Lena; Dominican Republic, Haiti

Social networks and migration: far west Nepalese labour migrants in Delhi

Thieme, Susan; India

Common pool resource management and conflict resolution in the Rufiji Floodplain, Tanzania

Meroka, Patrick; Tanzania

"We are as flexible as rubber!" Livelihood strategies, diversity and the local institutional setting of rubber small holders in Kerala, South India

Strasser, Balz; India

Analysis of institutional changes in forest management and their impact on rural livelihood strategies in NWFP, Pakistan

Shahbaz, Babar; Pakistan

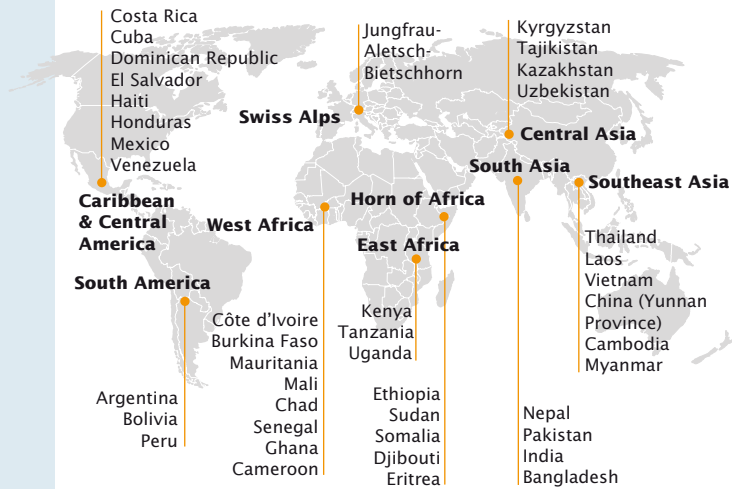
Reconciling biodiversity conservation priorities with livelihood needs in Kangchenjunga Conservation Area, Nepal Gurung, Ghana; Nepal

The power of images in sustainable development: their construction, replication and strategic use in the shaping of Alpine development [in German]

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Partnership Regions



Programme Management

- The NCCR North-South is directed by a board made up of representatives from the Swiss Partner Institutions together with the Regional Coordinators. It is headed by programme directors Hans Hurni and Urs Wiesmann, and coordinated by Thomas Breu.

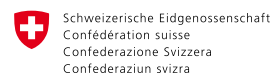
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