

Repositioning global development: changing actors, geographies and ontologies

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Among some of the most pressing global problems today are: i) the widening social inequalities within and between countries; ii) environmental pollution, ecological crises and conflicts over land and other resources; iii) migration, and the rise of extremism and populism; and iv) technological change contributing to increased risks to personal security and safety. While these issues are of complex origins, they are linked to globalization and the dominant global development model, in which corporate and individualistic interests stand above social and environmental ones, and logics, values and interests of Western countries stand above those of other countries. The magnitude of the crises linked to these global problems have led some academics, and some politicians to rethink their political and economic strategies and agendas. At the same time, recent years have witnessed simultaneous trends of weakening of established global economic and political leadership on the one hand, and the emergence of new economic powers on the other. This has led to the ascent of new actors in the global development arena, most notably China, India and Brazil. They and many others are rapidly emerging from what the conventional economic model had labelled as 'disadvantaged' parts of the world, and are increasingly playing a key role in development processes worldwide.

The crossroads at which humanity stands today requires a shift in development logics and paradigm. In this conference, we will discuss alternative development strategies and the role of emerging actors in development across multiple scales. Contributions from various disciplines, including human geography, environmental politics, development studies, sociology and institutional economics are called upon to discuss themes and questions, such as: 1. To what extent do global power shifts entail possibilities for more democratic—or conversely, more authoritarian—global governance? 2. What are the potentials of development and cooperation programmes in which problems and solutions emerge from geographical, societal, and gender-based margins? 3. Can we expect more socially and environmentally just, equality-laden and economically viable futures in the context of shifting geographies of development?

We invite scholars and practitioners with an interest in these broader questions to contribute with sessions and workshops. Appreciated are contributions that address one or more of the following themes. First, the emergence of new conceptual framings, which go beyond sustainability, economic growth and anthropocentric philosophy. For instance, thoughts and ideas based on, and inspired by, degrowth, radical ecological democracy, feminism and decolonization of development are valued. Second, emerging and changing narratives, policies and practices, responding to changing conditions in global development. Third, social, psychological, political and institutional transformations as prerequisites for development paradigm shift. Finally, examples of emerging trends in South-South cooperation, in terms of actors, issues and impacts.

The conference will serve as a platform to share research findings and experiences, as well as to develop new ideas and strategies for shifting development narratives and agendas, for re-connecting actors from different scales, and critically examining and redefining the meanings and logics of development. We welcome development scholars from a plurality of disciplines and critical theories, as well as practitioners from a broad range of professional backgrounds to explore ways to engage in progressive debates of building bridges between actors, scales, movements and societies at multiple levels and beyond global-local binaries.