

## Abstracts

### DSA-Scotland Conference 14 September 2012

Development Studies in Africa and South Asia: Cutting across regions and disciplines

Development Studies Association-Scotland Conference

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University of Edinburgh, Scotland

Organizers: *Gerhard Anders (Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh),  
Jeevan R. Sharma (Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Edinburgh).*

#### Session 1 (11:15-12:45), discussant Hilary Homans

##### Mozammel Huq (Department of Economics, University of Strathclyde)

###### **Microcredit and Poverty Alleviation: A Case Study of Bangladesh**

The main focus of the study is to see the role of microcredit in the alleviation of poverty in Bangladesh and, in the process, also view the role of the Social Safety Net (SSN) Programmes conducted by the Government of Bangladesh. Although the country has succeeded in reducing the very high level of poverty (over 70% that existed at the time of the independence of the country in 1971), it is still high, 31.5% of the total population suffering from poverty in 2010. The research, based on two series of field surveys, carried out in August-September 2010 and April-May 2012, helps us to see closely the roles played by the Government and the NGOs in poverty alleviation in Bangladesh. It is found that the state provision of social safety net programmes is almost negligible in urban areas, while in rural areas around 22% of households received some form of social safety net support. However, if we exclude the support provided in the form of natural disaster mitigation, the state support for social safety net programmes extends to only one-tenth of the rural households.

As far as support from NGOs is concerned, a large number of such organisations is found to be actively involved in both rural and urban areas: such involvement is widespread covering almost all rural areas, while in the urban areas, as expected, it is mainly confined to localities populated by low low-income groups (mainly the shanty towns). Though microcredit is the main activity provided by most of the NGOs operating in Bangladesh, they also provide, for example, occasional support for purchasing cows and goats, and corrugated tins for house construction. Some one-quarter of the rural households appears to have received microcredit from various NGOs, while some 16% of the households in the urban poor areas received such loans (even some of the households in both rural and urban areas received such credit from more than one NGO).

When it comes to the impact of such loans on poverty alleviation, contrary to the negative views expressed especially in recent years attacking the Grameen Bank, our survey findings show strong positive impacts of microcredit in income growth and, consequently, poverty alleviation. Over 98% of those receiving such loans expressed satisfaction, and half of them reporting high (significant) benefits in terms of increase in income; the corresponding figure was much higher in the case of the loan recipients in urban areas (62%) than in rural areas (51%). However, micro loans being offered by the NGOs are given only to members who belong to groups specifically formed with the aim that those receiving such loans will be able to repay the principal along with the interest. So micro loans as provided by the NGOs fail to attend to the needs of the vulnerable

people including the disabled and the destitute who can, obviously, be better attended by the SSN programmes in a systematic way. Also, there is no coordination of the various NGOs involved in poverty alleviation, hence at times the problems of duplication (i.e. the same person receiving loans from than one NGO), among other things.

**Irene Banda Mutalima, Phd Candidate Oxford Centre for Mission Studies and Wales University**

**Response to the voices of poor people- a reflexive comparative study on microfinance interventions as a model for poverty reduction.** Microfinance enables access to financial services for economic growth that leads to improved livelihoods for poor people. Though significant amounts of money have been channelled into microfinance activities, Africa has lagged behind for various reasons (Reille and Forster 2008).

As investments have grown, most microfinance institutions have increased their use of technology and attracting highly skilled staff from banks in order to meet accountability and transparency expectations. In some cases microfinance institutions have converted into commercial entities with a focus on profits to sustain the organisation and benefit the investor, over and above the social benefits.

Issues of low use of technology, low rate of upgrading management competencies and low intake of funds has meant that on average, much less resources have been poured into Africa. This negative outlook has exacerbated the general concerns about the efficacy of microfinance in poverty reduction. There are those who assert that microfinance is a 'global fad' (Mahajan 2007) without sustainable benefits to the poor. Others are worried about the stigma of debt in societies where debt is not normally condoned (Dichter 2007); the dynamic and diverse nature of livelihoods, needs and potentials of poor people whose needs include other services like health, schools, etc., apart from just debt (Matin et al. 2007); and the exclusion of the very poor and the rural poor from microfinance programs that primarily target the entrepreneurial poor (Allen 2007). There is an argument that poor people seem to be sidelined from deciding on what is good or what works for them. Harper talks about their dislike for being forced to work in groups (Harper 2007) and largely that there is no full information disclosure to them by these institutions (Rippey 2007:116).

**Kristinn Hermannsson, Fraser of Allander Institute, Department of Economics, University of Strathclyde, Sir William Duncan Building 130 Rottenrow, Glasgow, G4 0GE**

**Micro-Macro mismatch in the economic development impact of education: A structural simulation approach for the case of Malawi**

Micro-econometric evidence repeatedly finds high private returns to education, most prominently in less developed countries. To what extent this reflects an increase in productivity is a popular topic in labour economics. Opinions vary, but the consensus view is of qualified optimism. However, it is unclear to what extent this micro-level benefit translates into macro-economic impacts. Hitherto, most attempts at explaining this mismatch have focussed on statistical issues (in particular the way macro-impacts are estimated) or issues in the labour market, i.e. signalling/screening. I argue that it is further important to look at the details of the transmission mechanism from micro to macro, i.e. to look at the interaction between human capital and structural aspects of the economy.

I project changes increase in the stock of people with secondary and higher education in Malawi under status quo assumptions and estimate the associated long run productivity gains. Then I apply a Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) model to analyse how this efficiency impact translates into a macroeconomic impact.

Other things being equal the large efficiency gains associated with increased education suggest macro impacts of similar magnitudes or potentially larger. But this is contingent upon adjustments elsewhere in the economy, in particular investment and increased competitiveness stimulating external trade. Recent thinking in development economics recognises the role of structural impediments and numerous deviations from the paradigm of perfect markets. I use the CGE-model to address these structural issues and estimate the degree to which they influence the micro-macro transmission of the private market benefits of education.

**Session 2 (1:30-3pm), discussant: Ian Harper**

**Shishusri Pradhan, Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh**

### **Sub-regionalization of the socio-technical initiative – the National Mission on Biodiesel in India**

Biofuels are not a new phenomenon but recently their production has surged. The result has been described as the emergence of a globally integrated biofuel network - a global, socio-technical 'assemblage', which gives momentum, meaning and legitimacy to a 'biofuelled future'. Globalization and its associated global drivers have become ubiquitous; any new technology or initiative is not regional anymore, rather it is global. The increase in attention attracted by biofuels has resulted in an increase in biofuel production, policy initiatives, and R&D programmes the world-over. However, despite the global nature of biofuels as a new technology, various countries are following their own biofuel programmes based on the regional characteristics unique to their country. In this paper, I will describe how the National Mission on Biodiesel in India differed based on the regional politics and state governments in India. I will argue that the governance and implementation of the same national mission varied across two states because of the difference in politics and users adopting it. The case studies while referring to the same government project, are, however, complex and differentiated, pointing towards socio-political nuances and structural subtleties, while also revealing the importance of specificities that react to, undermine and reconfigure regional imperatives.

**Andrea Jimenez, Royal Holloway University of London <jimcis.andrea@gmail.com>**

### **'Innovation and technology Hubs as spaces for ICT development: When Africa innovates'**

Most studies of innovation in goods and services have been focused on industrialized countries rather than Sub-Saharan Africa. Given this, can Africa rely on European research of innovation? Or are local institutions, practices, norms and cultural values important to consider? When examining ways to enhance innovation in Sub-Saharan Africa, what challenges are particular of this region?

This study addresses these questions, by considering the translation of knowledge and the sharing of innovative ideas for social change within an innovation and technology hub located in Zambia. In this hub, technologists, web developers and programmers find significant barriers in their skills and to innovate. The aim of this research is to examine the way collaboration among like-minded people generates innovative ideas that meet social needs, a process known as social innovation. The methodological approach presents Actor Network Theory as a framework for understanding the phenomenon.

### Session 3 (3:15-4:45), discussant: Ian Taylor

**Annalisa Addis, University of Cagliari**

#### **Researching the link between Humanitarian Aid and Development**

My doctoral research deals with the issue of better linking humanitarian aid with development, with a focus on response to food crises. The issue has been already debated for decades, with most academics and practitioners agreeing on the need to promote livelihoods since the early phases of an emergency response. This notwithstanding, the bulk of humanitarian response to food crises is still made up of short-term – and often shortsighted – food aid interventions, especially when donors have been late in mobilizing funds and other options are no longer viable. Apart from that, I argue that aid agencies' reluctance to change may be one of the most relevant factors in preventing the actual implementation of "linking relief and development" policies. The lack of willingness to implement them may also constitute one of the reasons why policies tend to be so vague. Therefore, I will draw upon previous studies in organizational research, in order to understand what can make change more likely to happen. I am using a case study from southern Ethiopia, a region frequently stricken by drought-related food crises, situated in one of the biggest aid recipient countries, which make it easier to compare data on humanitarian practices over time. This is, however, a research on aid practices and not on Ethiopia, meaning that I am reviewing literature from other countries and that conclusions may turn useful in

similar contexts worldwide. For this research, I have more to learn from scholars studying NGO behaviour in India, rather than from specialists in African (or even Ethiopian) history or politics. In addition to that, as it is often the case with Development Studies, I will be crossing boundaries between different academic disciplines, although Sociology will play a pivotal role.

**Kathy Dodworth, University of Edinburgh** <kathy.dodworth@gmail.com>

#### **Interpreting the legitimacy of aid: challenges from within**

Regionalization has been interpreted as an endogenous process, precipitating a broader 'regionalism', whereby shared goals, interests and ultimately identity are articulated within a certain area or community. Alternatively, it can be interpreted as an exogenous process, whereby particular patterns or phenomena in the socio-political world are *ascribed* to specific regions on the basis of empirical study. Current interest within international aid policy circles in 'aid effectiveness', and its supporting concepts of 'good governance', 'coordination' and 'accountability', has enabled the continued ascription of various phenomena to the African 'region', more commonly in the form of failure than success. Regional ascription, even via the persistence of particular research agendas, can reaffirm the existing knowledge hierarchy and obscures a disjuncture with lived experience.

This disconnect between the local and translocal is best explored through a movement in 'scale'. As such, I draw on a Tanzanian district case study to highlight the poverty of the aid 'effectiveness', 'coordination', 'accountability' and 'governance' nexus, when juxtaposed with how aid is experienced at sub-national levels of administration. Furthermore, this discourse eclipses a more fundamental understanding of *legitimacy*. This is not legitimacy in its traditional guise as a political good, but as a localised, socio-political practice via which the use of power, influence and resource by development actors is negotiated and rendered acceptable in a crowded, at times chaotic, aid environment. I aim to contribute to a growing body of work that explores the aid environment as a socially

produced, contested and appropriated domain from below and within. As such, interpretative, critical ethnography tends towards the subversion of existing knowledge hierarchies but is also uniquely positioned to bridge disciplinary divides and challenge 'regionalizations' in their various forms.

**Carine Le Borgne, University of Edinburgh**

**Translation of international rights to 'participation' for children and young people, to practices and experiences at the local level: Comparing India (Tamil Nadu) and UK (Scotland)**

The aim of the research is to explore the translation of international rights to 'participation' for children and young people, to practices and experiences at the local level within two diverse cultural, social, economic and political contexts. The two contexts will be Scotland (UK) and Tamil Nadu (South India). This research will contribute to the growing discussion between the Majority (Tamil Nadu) and Minority World (Scotland) contexts.

The study proposes to follow a case study approach focusing on two children's rights organisations, one in Scotland and one in Tamil Nadu to look at participation from children and young people's own concerns through children's collective or children's group. In other words, it means to look at participation from the 'bottom to up' and to perceive how children and young people can make a change in their own community, participation in their everyday lives and concerns. Indeed, the goal is not to look at participation from 'top to down' where policy-makers for instance ask non-governmental organisations or voluntary sector to consult children and young people regarding their own agenda but to see how children and young people can or cannot influence local decision-makers and make a change in their community from their own priorities.

The study will include different stakeholders, besides children and young people, such as child participation workers and directors of the organisations, parents, teachers, local decision-makers. The central questions underpinning the research include:

- 1-How is participation from children and young people's own concerns defined and understood by different actors involved in children's rights organisations?
- 2-How does localized contexts such as constructions of childhood, socio-economic and cultural aspects impact on practices of children's participation?
- 3-What factors inhibit and/or facilitate such children and young people's participation as perceived and experienced by different actors?