

## Crossroads Asia Concept Papers, ISSN: 2192-6043

Competence Network Crossroads Asia: Conflict – Migration – Development

Editors: Ingeborg Baldauf, Stephan Conermann, Anna-Katharina Hornidge, Hermann Kreutzmann, Shahnaz Nadjmabadi, Dietrich Reetz, Conrad Schetter and Martin Sökefeld.

**How to cite this paper:** Crossroads Asia Working Group Development (2012): Development at the Crossroads: Development Research on Crossroads Asia – A Conceptual Approach. In: Crossroads Asia Concept Paper Series, No. 02-a.

Partners of the Network:



Freie Universität Berlin  
Zentrum für  
Entwicklungsländerforschung  
(ZELF)



Universität Köln  
Geographisches Institut



Humboldt Universität zu Berlin  
Zentralasienseminar



Universität Tübingen  
Institut für Ethnologie



Ludwig-Maximilians-  
Universität München  
Institut für Ethnologie



Zentrum Moderner Orient  
(ZMO)



Universität Bonn  
Institut für Orient- und  
Asienwissenschaften (IOA)  
Zentrum für  
Entwicklungsforschung (ZEF)

Funded by:



Bundesministerium  
für Bildung  
und Forschung

## Imprint

Competence Network *Crossroads Asia: Conflict – Migration – Development*

Project Office

Center for Development Research/ZEFa

Department of Political and Cultural Change

University of Bonn

Walter-Flex Str. 3

D-53113 Bonn

Tel: + 49-228-731722

Fax: + 49-228-731972

Email: [crossroads@uni-bonn.de](mailto:crossroads@uni-bonn.de)

Homepage: [www.crossroads-asia.de](http://www.crossroads-asia.de)

# Development at the Crossroads: Development research on Crossroads Asia – A Conceptual Approach

Henryk Alff, Joe Hill, Shahnaz Nadjmabadi, Lutz Rzehak

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Notions of development.....	3
3. Mobile ideas: discourses of development.....	6
4. Spatial mobility: migration, trade, and urbanization .....	9
5. Social mobility: poverty, inequality, and social differentiation.....	11
6. Social mobilisation: access to and control over resources.....	14
7. Methodological issues for the study of mobility and development .....	15
8. Summary.....	18
Bibliography.....	19

# 1. Introduction

The Crossroads Asia competence network focuses its attention upon connections and flows across (but not necessarily bound by) the geographical region stretching from eastern Iran to western China, and from southern Kazakhstan to northern India. However we do not take the conventional view of geographical space as a container-like unit. In applying a post-area studies approach, we aim to overcome the perceived limitations of traditional area studies, e.g. the study of Central Asia, the Middle East (Western Asia), or South Asia, in which people or social groups are lumped together and assumed to share certain characteristics. Though we cannot and do not negate the vastly differing histories of these areas, we can explore how people manage to consciously or habitually secure and adapt their lives and livelihoods to change, given their shared experiences of, for example, high levels of spatial mobility or corresponding immobility, and/or state and non-state interventions that may facilitate or impede local visions and practices aimed at change and progress. In our research we largely reject a statist view of societies and focus our efforts upon practices of translocal interactions and cross-border networks. That requires specific methodologies focusing on the positioning of people within broader processes of social, cultural, political and economic change.

Issues pertaining to human development present a challenge to the Western academic discourse on 'development as practice', which refers to the so-called 'development industry'. These sets of discourses and practices often concentrate upon the former colonies of European nation-states. They do not take into consideration the exceptionally diverse societies where we conduct our research, which are characterised by significant cultural, social and political overlapping. These diverse societies have unsurprisingly given rise to very different models for and ideas of development that do not sit comfortably with Western statist and nation-state centric viewpoints of people's welfare condition. Development in this Eurocentric sense has its roots in the Bretton Woods institutions formed post-Second World War, the division of the world into the so-called developed (the North) and developing nations (the South), and transfers from North to South in which donor countries have tended to give most aid to countries they formally colonised (Gardner and Lewis 1996).

The end of the dominance of unitary theories of progress (e.g. modernisation and dependency theory) in Western (though not in Chinese) development thought, and in the development field the (at least partial) absorption of the post-development critique of the aid industry, has led to a rejection of attempts at generalisation by some academics, though not by many international and national development policymakers. We witness instead an emphasis upon social diversity, plurality of viewpoints, and the understanding of the primacy of localised experiences and discourses. Societies or communities are no longer viewed as static entities, in space, place or time. Change is now considered the norm, facilitated by the recognition of a seemingly increasing mobility of people, resources and ideas across space and time frames, due to technological innovations and progress such as mobile phones and transportation systems (cf. Sheller and Urry 2006). These patterns are calling for new ways to study and conceptualise development issues. Indeed, since the end of grand theories, attention in social sciences has focused on the growth of transnational or translocal modes of living, as well as the everyday life strategies of groups, households and individuals.

Challenging the conventional understanding of development (as related to economic growth and state-led top-down development, or of development as practised by international aid organisations) in the framework of the Crossroads Asia competence network we seek to apply an approach which puts equal emphasis on political, cultural and economic aspects of societal change. Interventions are

viewed as ongoing transformational processes in which different actors' interests and struggles are located, rather than simply the implementation of plans (Long 1992: 9).

We are particularly interested in people's perspectives and interpretations of development. There is growing recognition that local epistemologies, science and ethics have much to offer to the sustainable development debate. Today, various groups and societies are exploring holistic approaches to development not in an effort to return to a subsistence existence, but as an alternative to Western models. That includes an understanding of the ways people negotiate and initiate change, e.g. through individual small-scale trade, or through linguistic representations of change. We also do not intend to falsely dichotomise notions of the state and society: the state is a heterogeneous entity, whose representatives' hail from the larger population, so the state cannot be considered separate from the society over which it rules. In summary, we wish to highlight the role of diversity and innovations in development processes, such as the hybrid forms of knowledge and expertise used in managing livelihood strategies, and to investigate the multiple ways in which local development processes become linked to national, regional and global representations.

The four subprojects included in this concept paper all relate to varying conceptualisations of development and mobility. Henryk Alff (D1) examines development potentials and risks of transformed exchange processes in the borderlands of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Xinjiang, focusing on the shift and transport of ideas shaping modernisation, and the interrelation of these processes with mobility of people and goods in cross-border small-scale trade networks. Shahnaz Nadjmabadi (D2) discusses development in the eastern provinces of Iran, Khorassan and Sistan/Baluchistan, as a process of social change and long-term transition, to understand the complexity and dynamism of people's strategies and efforts to operationalise their own holistic visions of development. Joe Hill (D3) explores social differentiation and farmer-managed irrigation for mountain agriculture across the Alai-Pamir-Karakoram-Himalaya, showing how spatial mobility and processes of social mobilisation interact with state and non-state interventions in irrigation. Lutz Rzehak (D4) discusses the link between society and language within the regional and thematic scope of the Crossroads Asia project with a main focus on Afghanistan.

This paper aims to show how and why the concept of mobility is central to our investigations into development processes, practices and discourses. Section two discusses notions of development, ending with a discussion on how we conceptualise mobility in its various forms. Section three discusses the way the mobility of ideas or discourses surrounding development, notably ideas of modernisation, or of being modern, impact upon people. Section four explores how forms of spatial mobility interrelate with development processes, and section five explores the inter-relations between social mobility and social differentiation with development. Section six considers the way in which social mobilisation relates to the control and access over resources. In section seven, we include a discussion on the methodological implications of this conceptual approach, and section eight summarises the paper's argument.

## 2. Notions of development

The term development cannot be considered merely a concept, but rather represents a set of processes, practices and ideas. From both anthropological and sociological perspectives, development has been theorised in three ways: 1) as a discourse, vision, or ideology, 2) as a series of events or historical processes of social change, and 3) as a series of actions or practices, or deliberate efforts aimed at improvement (Gardner and Lewis 1996, Thomas 2000). Long, for example, whose work bridges sociology and anthropology, develops an actor-oriented theoretical and methodological approach to the study of social change and intervention that incorporates structure and agency, and grounds its concepts in the everyday life experiences and understandings of men and women, be they peasants, entrepreneurs, government bureaucrats, or researchers (Long 1992: 5). A similar approach is taken by several of our research projects.

It is not by coincidence that the above three meanings of development, as a vision, process and practice, respectively equate with the word's dictionary definition as an adjective (developed), noun (development) and verb (to develop). The adjective 'developed' is inherently subjective and judgemental, implying a standard with which to compare things, e.g. the condition of infrastructure such as roads or housing, or of one social (or ethnic) group as compared to others. As a noun 'development' is used in an everyday and often intendedly neutral descriptive manner to indicate new products or events, for example housing or industrial development, or the development of a theory. The verb 'develop' refers to the activities required to bring about change or progress, which may be carried out by people, state or non-state agencies, or international organisations. For reasons of heterogeneous use, therefore, it is difficult to declare a final view on the slippery notion(s) of development.

In addition, the manifold meanings of development also relate strongly to the context in which the term is used. Positionality frames people's ontological and epistemological stance, their starting point for action, because differently positioned people have distinct identities, experiences and perspectives, which shape their understanding of and engagement with the world (cf. Haraway 1998, in Leitner et al. 2008). The meaning one confers upon the term 'development' relates to with whom one is talking (and at which context of place and time); for example, be it to a neighbour in one's village or residential area, to a European working for an international organisation from whom one's community wishes to gain funds, or to a researcher coming from Germany.

As outlined in the first section, one dominant tendency has been to use the term development to refer specifically to the practice of state and non-state development-related agencies operating in the global South. This is partly because there has been little debate within so-called development circles about the current direction or forms of progress in the 'advanced' North (Thomas 2000). The post-development school has extensively criticised development as a set of ideas and practices, in particular taking the post- Second World War era as the advent of development as practice, and charging its proponents with the reproduction of neo-colonial power relations. Escobar and other post-development writers insist that development as a discourse is linked to a particular mode of thinking, and that as a source of practice it is designed to instil in 'underdeveloped' countries the desire to strive towards industrial and economic growth (e.g. Escobar 1995). Others have countered this argument, admitting the 'appalling reality of the development industry and the disastrous effects of its interventions' (De Vries 2007), but recognising that development plans, workers and policies

are objective entities that cannot just be wished away, and that development continues to be a powerful idea and practice affecting the lives of millions (Gardner and Lewis 1996).

A further critique of the post-development school is that ideas of development are often re-shaped, re-scripted and transformed by mobilisation processes on the ground, i.e. at the local level of development intervention (D'Souza 2012). This position particularly builds on the work of James Scott's 1985 'Weapons of the Weak', which holds that even the passive victims of larger forces of control and domination are nevertheless capable of subtle forms of resistance. The possibilities for mobilisation processes by communities 'on the ground' are however contingent upon historical and contemporary societal factors; including the form of government, for authoritarian governments are often less tolerant or encouraging towards the active participation of citizens in development-related matters. Nevertheless the role of state institutions in enhancing processes of development needs to be taken seriously. Following Long, we wish to stress that it is theoretically unsatisfactory to base analyses on concepts of external determination: individuals and social groups, as actors and structures, mediate and transform all types of external intervention (1992: 20).

It is not the intention of the Crossroads Asia research programme to engage in issues pertaining solely to planned (development) interventions. Much of our research relates to social processes affected only in part by – or taking place regardless of – state and non-state agencies. What we do, hope to achieve, is the 'deterritorialisation' of notions of development in wake of globalising processes, to break from nation-state centric analyses, to reconsider the relationship between space and development issues (cf. Robinson 2002), and to focus – at least to a certain degree – on translocal social groups.

Figure 1 shows the positioning of the research projects D1, D2, D3, and D4 in a schematic, as relating to the conceptualisation of development as a process, practice and discourse. Project D1 puts its focus on the overlapping of all three notions. It looks at how trading communities adapt to, challenge and shape state-led development, inflict long-term change and thus become subject to and agents of certain understandings of development. D2 considers development as a process of social change and long-term transition, and focuses on the local population's discourses and visions of self-determined development within the context of state-led development initiatives. D3 falls at the intersection of the three notions of development, because while some irrigation systems are created or repaired by 'external' interventions (development as practice), many irrigation systems were created by and are maintained by water users without external assistance. D4 relates strongly to the notions of development as discourse as well as long-term social change, as it interrogates the intertwined nature of language and societal developments.

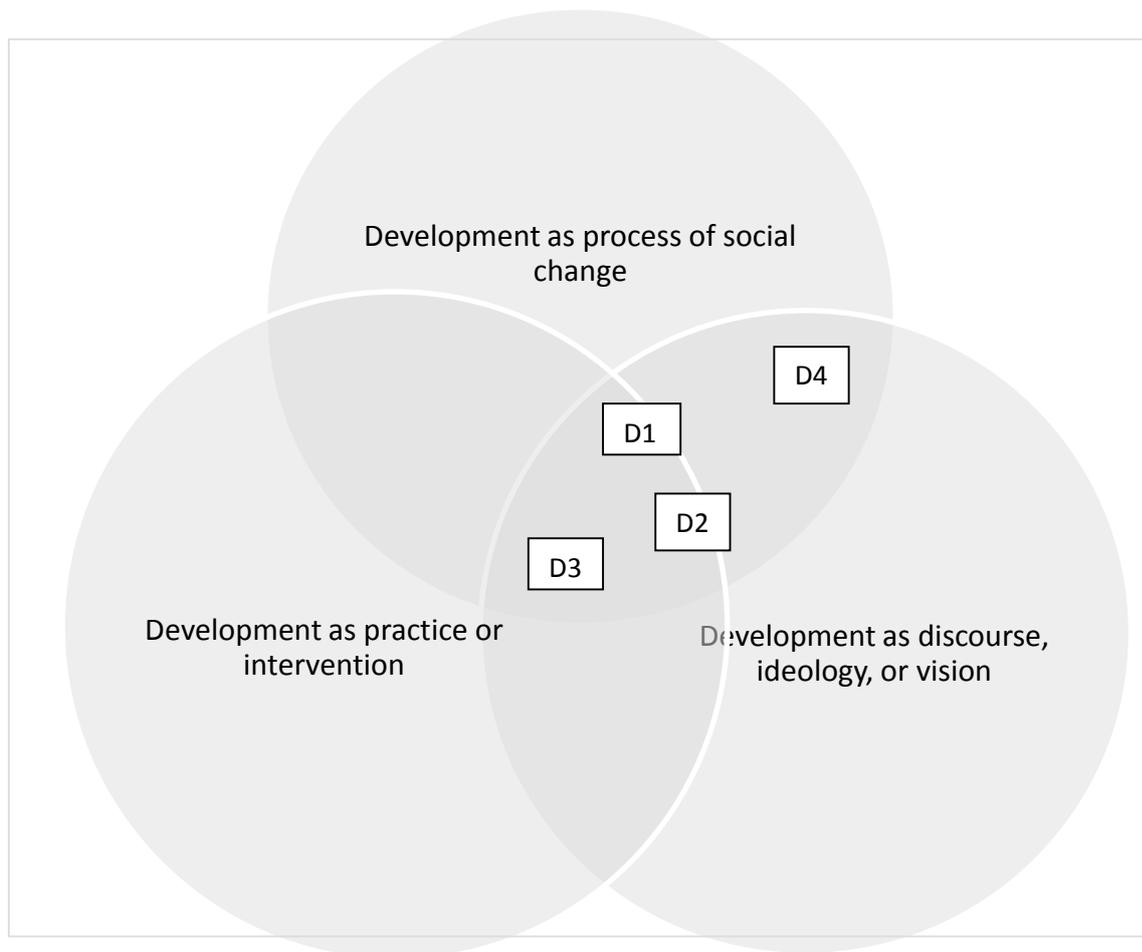


Figure 1: The three notions of development, and the positioning of our research projects.

Development in its different senses or meanings is linked to the concept of mobility in a multitude of ways. Mobility has been privileged by the Crossroads Asia research programme as the lens through which each sub-project will conduct its research. Following Leitner et al. (2008) and Jessop et al. (2008) we are aware that the privileging of mobility over other sociospatial concepts may potentially prove to be overly one-dimensional. For example, Jessop et al. (2008: 389) criticise such one-dimensionality for its tendencies of theoretical amnesia and exaggerated claims to conceptual innovation, for its use of chaotic concepts rather than rational abstractions, and for its over-extension of concepts and their imprecise application. Both sets of authors put forward proposals for the simultaneous usage of several sociospatial concepts, including territory, place, scale and networks (Jessop et al. 2008), and positionality, mobility, place, scale and network (Leitner et al. 2008). All or most of our research projects, will complement the use of the term mobility with other socio-spatial concepts, most notably territory, place and networks.

The concept of mobility, as defined by Urry (2007: 7-8), is used in four main senses. In its most simple sense, mobility means that something moves or is capable of moving. We extend this conceptualisation to include discourses, ideas and values pertaining to development. The second sense of mobility is that of horizontal or spatial mobility, i.e. migration, semi-permanent geographical movement and urbanisation. Thirdly, mobility means the sense of upward or downward (vertical) social mobility within a societal hierarchy, e.g. class distinctions or social differentiation according to asset distribution. Fourthly, mobility can refer to social mobilisation, i.e. the mobilisation of people

(and resources) to achieve certain goals. This fourth sense is under-developed by Urry, who conceptualises this sense of being mobile “as a *mob*, a rabble or an unruly crowd” (ibid.: 8). In our view what Urry terms ‘mobs’ can be seen as groups of actors mobilising themselves and the necessary resources to achieve certain political, economic and/or cultural ends. The following four sections discuss each of these four senses of the term mobility in turn, linking them with development.

### **3. Mobile ideas: discourses of development**

The relatively broad definition of mobility within the theoretical framework of our research network allows elaboration upon the (horizontal and vertical) mobility of ideas, knowledge and values. Development in its meanings as long-term social change, or as a deliberate effort or intervention to forge change, is shaped by ideas and values. Few people would argue that access to knowledge through appropriate education, to healthcare to prevent needless death or suffering, and to sufficient food to live a wholesome and dignified life are not attributes of a desirable society. However the ‘vision’ component of how such a state of ‘development’ can or should be achieved is murkier and thus less straight forward to elaborate upon. This is where development as discourse comes into play.

Historically, societies within our research focus were influenced by the exchange of people and goods as well as ideas, values and norms along the ‘Silk Roads’, with far-reaching trans-ecological and trans-civilisational implications (Christian 2000, di Cosmo 1999). Geopolitical reconfigurations in the course of the ‘Great Game’ between the Russian and British Empires in the 19<sup>th</sup> and earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the more recent Sino-Soviet divide from the 1960s to late 1980s as well as continuous colonial rule and recent decades of sovereignty, have led to tremendous consequences for these exchange processes and subsequently for affected societies (Kreutzmann 2009). The ongoing territorial and social shift of dominant paradigms and local representations of development are no exclusions to these patterns. In fact, representations of development among actors, groups and societies are heterogeneous, dynamically changing and often interconnected with each other. However, one has to be clear with the depiction of modernity (as of tradition) and thus, the way to ‘become modern’ can be seen to be a profoundly discursive process (Houben and Schrepf 2008: 11). It is much shaped by representations of (often binary) territorial and social particularities such as centre and periphery, mountains and plains, state and non-state (and often a combination of these). Furthermore, Eurocentric and local conceptualisations of development are heavily interacting with each other within transformation processes in many of the places upon which we focus our research.

The paradigm of modernisation has been on sharp decline in the Western development discourse in recent decades. It has been strongly criticised for supporting top-down initiated, interventionist approaches that were expected to put ‘underdeveloped’ states on the path of gradual development, to generate growth, and therefore to enable economic take-off. Whereas these expectations often failed to materialise in the experience of Western development practice in much of the global South, within ‘China’s unprecedented rise’, modernisation has taken paradigmatic importance. However, it would be erroneous to believe that the process of China’s modernisation since the beginning of the reform era in 1978 is entirely based on Western concepts, and that it will do so in the future. Jacques rightly points out that “as China progresses further down the road of modernisation, it will find itself less constrained by the imperatives of [Western] development, more confident about what it is and

where it has come from, less anxious about being accepted and more at ease about its sense of difference” (Jacques 2012: 172). Thus, as can be derived from such a viewpoint, China’s modernisation, although having borrowed extensively from Western thought, be it Neoliberalism or Soviet-style Marxism-Leninism, is likely to proceed to some degree according to its own (Confucian) values, with a special focus given to so called social harmony (*xiaokang in pinyin*). A culturally distinctive characterisation certainly applies also for state-led modernisation processes in many places across the focus area of Crossroads Asia, be it in India, Iran or, more influentially in project D1, in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Concepts of ‘modernity’ and processes of ‘modernisation’, however, are likely to be much more contested in these cases on various scales, including competition or confrontation of one or another idea of being or becoming modern or more developed shifting across borderlands. Project D1 engages more thoroughly with outcomes of these shifts and contestations (and possible adaptations) of modernisation paradigms in the case of the borderlands of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Xinjiang and with dedication to small-scale trade practices, that (re-)evolved at a massive scale across these borderlands in the course of the last two decades. More specifically, it will be highlighted, how trade entrepreneurs encounter and use the potential of modernisation approaches and question their outcomes in different locations. In proceeding so, a particular aim of the project is to understand which role trade entrepreneurs as ‘agents of modernisation or development’ play across borderlands.

Reflecting the discourse of development related to modernisation in Iran's eastern provinces Khorassan and Sistan/Baluchestan (D2), two levels can be distinguished. Firstly, state development programmes’ goals rest on certain ideological assumptions about what ‘development’ is. The programmes’ core objectives are related to, for example, ‘improving the quality of life of all the residents’ and realizing ‘growth with equity’. These goals are to be achieved via the implementation of specific interventions across a range of sectors, with an emphasis on the physical infrastructure of roads and the kinds of facilities associated with urban areas. Secondly, the needs and desires of the local population as programme beneficiaries and their understanding about what ‘development’ is and should be. The opinions expressed during fieldwork reveal that the aim in development is to achieve collective empowerment through the formation of consciousness and knowledge generation. For certain local actors, ‘development’ is not simply a process of directed change leading to certain kinds of economic and social transformation, but depends on the accomplishment of a series of corresponding moral transformations in the consciousness of people: creating solidarity, common welfare, mutual support, creation of cooperatives.

The state-led and privately initiated development projects provide the local population with the ability to realize a particular form of development that includes access to cash, services, and experiences of modernity. On the other hand, and for other groups, it also sharpens fears and risks of marginalization and the possibility of being left out of the modernity promise. Though modernity is presented as an achievement that constitutes an arrival at some historical end point, for many it is increasingly clear that modernity comes with no guarantee of permanence and that connections with “the modern world” can be broken as easily as they can be made (Ferguson 2002). Questions to be asked in project D2 include: the kind of expectations the local population has about the future; what it really means to local actors to undergo a process of change to a desired future, and how such a process is planned, steered and implemented and who is in control of the process.

Discussions during the first trip to Khorassan and Baluchestan in autumn 2011 with people living at the edge of development projects have shown that though economic development has occurred in

both provinces, people still see themselves as being in a way tied into 'traditional' culture (*farhang e sonnati*), which implies an absence of development. They take the view that *Pish raft* 'going forwards' (progress) depends on *farhangsazi* (education, cultural development), *danesh* (knowledge), *e'etemad* (self confidence), and *khalaqiyat* (creativity). Thus project D2 particularly seeks to recognise the creativity and cultural capacities of local people. In fact, one aspect having been neglected in current studies on development is the revelation of the creative potentials within cultures, i.e. to show the dynamics of innovation processes, how they evolve, expand and under what conditions they are effective or prevented. Consequently what needs much more consideration is the way creative forces are produced and used by individual and collective actors to generate processes of change in society (Baumann 1992, Hannerz 1987). Particularly the social behaviours applied by the 'agents of change', entrepreneurs and decision makers will be explored, who, drawing on their social capital (network systems), their creative ideas, visions and innovations, get involved in the development process.

Project D3 engages with discourses of development transported through the agency of both state and non-state 'development' actors. The expansion, then contraction of the Russian empire/Soviet Union and British Empire was followed by the incorporation of water users, places and localities within the territories of the nation-states (selected for study) Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and India. Differing periods and intensities of state expansion and contraction have greatly impacted upon property rights over and entitlements to land and water resources, thus defining to a great extent community relationships at the local level. As Baker points out, "[S]tate support, whether for common, private, or public forms of property regimes, invariably reinforces a specific array of power relations at the local level, thus helping to forge specific types of communities" (2005: 97). The reformist objectives of states, including structural policy mechanisms such as the assessment and collection of taxes on land, or redistribution of land (land reform), influences the structure of village communities and the distribution of resource rights and access within them, simultaneously contributing to the project of state-making (*ibid.*) through the use of development discourses.

Project D3 shows how the socio-political context within which hill irrigation systems across the Alai-Pamir-Karakoram-Himalaya are situated has altered dramatically over the past 100-150 years; generally speaking moving from periods of feudal to colonial rule, and then to a post-colonial and ostensibly democratic era. Development 'interventions' were typically through a degree of coercion and reliant on the labour and subservience of local populations in the feudal period, and dictated by the state and very much top-down and infrastructural – if at all, they took place – in colonial periods. State-led notions of development in Tsarist Russia/Soviet Union and in British India, though differing greatly across the Wakhan divide, shared certain ideas and beliefs of what constituted progress, e.g. sedentarisation of nomads, increased food production, and increased area under the plough/tractor.

In the contemporary neoliberal and globalising era, some nation-states' inability to generate and provide funding to rural mountainous regions and communities has made space for a plethora of international development agencies to fill the generated vacuums. Such agencies fund infrastructural projects for the improvement and maintenance of irrigation systems, alongside which changes deemed 'best practice' according to global norms are conditionally introduced; for example, farmers are organised into water user associations, or 'irrigation service fees' are introduced and collected. The social and ideological relationships between the local (water users) and the global (international agencies) are developed and sustained in a seemingly ad hoc way through networks, which relate to the mobility of individual actors, resources and ideas. The notion of development introduced in such

interventions is considered to be participatory and in some cases emancipatory by the agencies promulgating them; however the reality is often that of universally applicable, standard formulas (cf. Boelens 2008a, Boelens et al. 2010) being forced upon water users, desperate to receive funding to maintain irrigation systems whose maintenance is under strain due to altered figurations at the irrigation system and community level. An example of this is provided by a Kyrgyz provincial level water manager, who during an interview in November 2011, stated that Europeans mistakenly think that all the Central Asian states' peoples and problems are the same, and as such, they impose similar conditionalities on (e.g. World Bank) loans. This reflection is an important insight by a government official whose state's territorial integrity and sovereignty is challenged by macro-level political economic restructuring following the Soviet Union's collapse. The effects of contemporary interventions perhaps mirror those of earlier state-led development interventions, in that they can be top-down having a disciplining effect on the recipients' and their ways of organising.

The project of Lutz Rzehak (D4) studies the link between society and language with a focus on terms which can be qualified as social key words in the conceptual frame of the Crossroads Asia project. With a regional focus on Afghanistan it is based upon the idea that words can be explored as conceptual tools which reflect a society's past experience of doing and thinking about things in certain ways and provide static structures in a long term memory of the speakers of a language. Analyzing the link between the life of a society and the lexicon of the language/s spoken by it means to reveal the concept, which the speakers of a language have typically in mind when a particular word is used. Such concepts are subject to change and variation when the society changes, but a person's conceptual perspective on life remains influenced or constrained by the conceptual tools provided by his or her native language. Since concepts behind words can be seen as static structures in a long term memory the definition and exploration of social key words as conceptual tools will add not only a linguistic but a cultural dimension to the discussion of development and modernity.

#### **4. Spatial mobility: migration, trade, and urbanization**

In social science there has been a bolstered academic interest in the binary relationship of development and mobility, particularly stimulated by the significance given to migration (an important form of spatial mobility) and the perception of mobility in respect to social and economic development. Mobility in the theoretical framework of the Crossroads Asia competence network is primarily defined as the interaction of social and spatial movements (or flows) of people, material and immaterial resources, ideas, knowledge and values through reciprocal exchanges within and between networks. Building on Castells' work (2001: 467) we see flows as purposeful, repetitive, even programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors in the economic, political, and symbolic structures of society. The term flows thus denotes all exchange processes. We include migration - the movement of people - among these flows.

Project D1 looks at how spatial mobility in small-scale trade uses, adjusts and shapes development, and more specifically modernisation processes. The break-up of the Soviet Union, the ease of restrictions of personal movement and the re-opening of former rigidly closed borders almost immediately opened the way for hundreds of thousands of so called shuttle or suitcase traders. This form of socio-economic activity saw its beginnings in private distribution, or what was called a second economy in Soviet times (Kaiser 1997: 3), providing in the centralised system of distribution

unavailable goods or services. Given economic constraints like plummeting salaries in state enterprises and sharply increasing unemployment, many people were rather coerced to deal with ad hoc trade practices than they were engaging with it voluntarily (Spector 2008: 45). Traders regularly started to travel from Almaty, Bishkek and numerous other places of the Soviet Union as far as Istanbul, Dubai or Delhi and later Urumqi, Beijing and Guangzhou for often rising amounts of merchandise on high demand for reselling them favourably. Similarly, Chinese merchants expanded their business westwards to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia (see Chang and Rucker-Chang 2011). Since then, mobility of people and goods in small-scale trade has become increasingly bound to social networks having their nodes at newly established retail and wholesale bazaars, manufacturing facilities and border crossings.

Flows of people and goods in small-scale trade are often linked to the re-emergence (or re-construction) of a 'Silk Road', variously represented by the agency of traders and state officials. Individual trade entrepreneurs often assess their activities as a vital element of the local culture of consumption going back to the historical 'Silk Road' and referring to the re-birth of entrepreneurialism in the post-Soviet period. In the technocratic language of state programmes, particularly in Kazakhstan, individual trade is hitherto represented as uncivilised. The 'new Silk Road', from the state's point of view, is rather associated with the upgrade of 'modern' railway, road and pipeline infrastructure, prestigious large-scale projects of Special Economic Zones connecting Western China with Western Europe on the one hand and effective border regulation on the other. The negotiation process revolving around these positions strongly affects the flow of people and goods in individual trade, rendering change (of strategies of supply and distribution) a permanent character of trade entrepreneurs' activities.

Similarly in recent years, Iran has embarked on a series of ambitious projects to develop its long neglected eastern provinces and to revive the historic 'Silk Road' by the expansion and construction of transit routes. It has done so to take advantage of its geopolitical and geo-economic position at a regional/international level, due to the newly established International *North South Transport Corridor* (INSTC), initiated by Russia, Iran and India along the Iran-Pakistan-Afghanistan border. This transit road will allow the transportation of goods from India via the Iranian ports of Chabahar and Bandar Abbas, on the Persian Gulf, then by rail or by highways (Dannreuther 2003, Maleki 2009). Project D2 will elaborate how the state's pursuit of road construction and all-encompassing infrastructure projects have facilitated the flow of goods, knowledge and capital into the region and have opened up new opportunities and economic niches. Thus the border region brings together a large number of intermediaries, traders, migrants, artisans and entrepreneurs, all trying to get access to resources and to profit from the specific opportunities and networks to improve living conditions. Due to their actions, initiatives and societal engagements such actors get involved and participate in the developmental process, attain social mobility and contribute to long-term social change. The analysis of this encounter shall give an insight into how development strategies evolve in the borderlands of eastern Iran and how they relate to regional developments.

Project D3 shows how high levels of out-migratory, non-farm employment, movements of people to urban centres for education and for permanent settlement (urbanisation processes) (e.g. Alai, Pamir), and/or large in-flows of tourists, military personnel and/or migrant labourers (e.g. Ladakh in trans-Himalaya), have transformed the demographics of localities positioned high in mountain valleys. Figurations of water users and of water uses alter due to the physical absence of youngsters, even entire households, and due to changing value systems and priorities in livelihoods choices and

crop preferences, all of which impact upon the institutional arrangements for water management. Out-migration is not a new phenomenon in some mountain communities. Schmidt (2008) shows that the British-instigated land revenue settlements of 1901 and 1911 in Shigar Valley (located in Gilgit-Baltistan, Karakoram), fixed tax revenues for a 14 year period at such a high level – without possibility of exemption for the poorest – that besides selling parts of their land and livestock, many young men emigrated from the region to avoid hardship. In-migration is a fairly recent phenomenon elsewhere. The opening up of Ladakh to tourists since the 1970s, as well as the massive military presence and the Indian state's development programmes, have precipitated great changes in livelihood opportunities, but have also upset the fine socio-ecological balance developed by Ladakhis over centuries (Norberg-Hodge 1991). Increasing levels of non-farm employment, the powerful discourse of development and modernity that accompanies new values and patterns of work and livelihood, and more broader social changes such as declining importance of village-level structures and authority, effect common property irrigation systems in myriad ways, e.g. decreased participation in canal maintenance, a decline in the authority of water masters, and changing crop patterns.

In the valleys of the Pamir and Alai mountain ranges out-migration appears to be a fairly new phenomenon. Villagers tend to equate their new-found 'democracy' following the collapse of the Soviet Union, with 'freedom of movement' as well as the increased prices and reduction in quality of food items and other necessary goods. Here poverty forces nearly every single household to send at least one family member to Russia (and for the Kyrgyz also to Kazakhstan). The migrants remit at least Euro 80 to 120 per month, enabling households to purchase rather than grow wheat; thus migration and remittances alter cropping patterns. Combined with a changing climate, which may be causing more erratic rainfall and cloud formations, and perhaps longer winters, in many cases this leads households to devote more of their land to grow fodder for their animals. The side-effect is a reduced value placed on irrigated agriculture and on irrigation system maintenance activities, which combined with changing value systems that place less prestige on the elders in a community – who traditionally played a role in the mobilisation of community members for canal maintenance tasks – leads to canals falling into a state of disrepair. Such effects are likely present in the Pakistan-administered Karakoram region too.

Like other linguistic concepts the social keywords to be studied in project D4 are subject to change and variation when the society changes. In this respect the project will focus both on spatial and social mobility asking how linguistic variation reflects changes of social life and changing social values.

## **5. Social mobility: poverty, inequality, and social differentiation**

The spatial mobility of people (and of resources, goods etc.) within or between networks can both contribute to development and foster inequalities or the reverse (de Haas 2008: 23-24). Functionalist, neo-classical thought accentuates more on the positive effects of spatial mobility on development, e.g. brain gain, transfer and productive investment of remittances, whereas structuralist, neo-Marxist thought tends to address it as a negative phenomenon (de Haas 2008: 24). These social phenomena are often considered a result of, or facilitated through, the frequent (including cross-border) mobility of people and resources (e.g. different forms of capital, knowledge) and the durability of ties within cross-cutting interpersonal networks. However, while many scholars

point more to the upwards vertical (social) mobility or the positive development effects of spatial mobility (see e.g. Nyberg-Sørensen et al. 2002), one must take into account that development and (both spatial and social) mobility are to be analysed particularly in a changing context of power on different scales, time and space, which can facilitate or limit development and mobility, as we attempt to show in our Crossroads Asia research.

Besides addressing spatial mobility, which is apparently a central element in understanding the small-scale trade-development nexus, project D1 puts its focus on the dimension of social mobility. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union individual trade has undergone significant tendencies of diversification. Patterns of ownership of and access to resources vary widely between basic retail and wholesale, informing a large number of intermediate forms. Smaller retail businesses, due to fluctuating turnovers, remain to be varyingly lucrative and vulnerable to shocks. In contrast, trade entrepreneurs in larger wholesale have over the years established thriving businesses with turnovers of millions (or even tens of millions) of US-\$, giving employment to salaried shopkeepers and investing in warehousing, transport, tourism and other service sectors. They favourably utilise extensive socio-economic networks that include close ties to manufacturers in southeastern China, middlemen, through transport providers to state officials in the borderlands, as well as to long-standing customers from as far away as Moscow and western Siberia. Given their success and, at the same time, their 'moral' function in both catering predominantly to low-income households and generating employment, wholesale traders have increasingly questioned and challenged state-led approaches to 'modernise' the trade sector and state welfare functions in general. Such a position is increasingly overlapping with the viewpoints of larger parts of the population, especially in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, who generally embrace the modernising mission of state authorities even while questioning such missions' actual outcomes and effects with regards to socially vulnerable groups. This is one example of how social mobility is based upon and contributes to the contestation of power imbalances.

Project D2 attempts to understand how far equality of opportunities to achieve one's potential is attainable for all members of society in the eastern provinces of Iran, and thus examines the conditions for social mobility. Particularly an analysis of the role of traders and migrants, intermediaries, artisans and entrepreneurs, who take profit from the recent exploration of resources and established opportunities, and succeed in generating processes of change, may go some way to explaining the different social mobility experiences of each one of them. One of the central questions related to social mobility and development will be how far the practices of 'agents of change' will open up the space for social mobility, modifying people's awareness of societal practices and everyday occurrences. Which kind of social transformations are induced through their initiatives and interventions, and are these recognized as processes of development and change by all members and at all levels of the society?

Project D3 examines how levels of equality/inequality between and among water users have been affected by the earlier-mentioned state and non-state precipitated changes, which include land redistribution, ideological and material forms of support to irrigation systems and agriculture, and migratory processes, related remittances and other demographic changes. Inequality relates to social differentiation and also to social mobility, in the sense of class formation and vertical economic movement in relation to ones' neighbours. Irrigation systems require coordinated action to impound and/or harness water for its conveyance to individual farmers' lands, there is an inherent contradiction between the common management of water and the individual ownership of land (a

dialectic between community and individualism, cf. Bray 1986). Hill irrigation systems are socially constructed, have social requirements for use, and have social effects (cf. Mollinga 2003). For example, indigenous or endogenously-conceived irrigation technologies, such as gravity-flow hill irrigation systems, were developed and designed by stakeholders who knew one another and their limited resources and means. The design and construction took place under certain (e.g. feudal) social conditions. By contrast, irrigation systems developed or repaired through state and non-state interventions involve the interaction of engineers and other stakeholders, as well as the introduction of technologies and materials often beyond the means or expectations of local farmers. As the choice of technical design is imposed upon farming communities, so too are preconceived notions of the purposes the introduced technologies will serve, and the institutional forms through which they should be achieved (Boelens 1998b). These notions may or may not be harmonious with pre-existing institutional arrangements and value systems, which relate to issues related to social differentiation and the objectives of irrigation.

To understand inequalities in irrigation, households within communities can be categorised socio-economically but allowing for an analysis of social differentiation that does not create false images of households lacking agency. Poverty is considered a relative phenomenon in project D3. Typically, one can find households in mountain localities that are relatively wealthy, 'middle' or average, poor, and very poor (though these categories are incomparable with lowland societies). These categories often coincide with size of landholding, and sometimes correspond with the position of farmland within an irrigation system command area. Farmland and irrigation infrastructure are forms of landesque capital that have been developed over decades or centuries, their ownership and control often consolidated disproportionately in the hands of a minority within any community for reasons that include historical, state-led reform processes. However, all social actors are considered to possess agency, defined as knowledgeability and capability (Giddens 1984). Social actors use their agency to solve problems, interact with and intervene in the flow of events around them, and to a degree to monitor their own and others' actions (Long 2001). Water using households (following Bourdieu, the household heads are considered to represent the household via their possession of the totality of social capital possessed by the household) are considered, in project D3, to be endowed with agency allowing them space to pursue their own strategies, but also to resist certain forms of repression (Mehta 2005); no matter their relative wealth within their immediate community.

The way irrigation is modelled, strongly relates to ideological visions about how society should be structured, or about how society should develop. For example, new institutional economics, popular among international policy makers and agencies, tends to stress the importance of individual, transferable, well-defined and enforceable water rights, which it sees as a precondition for the emergence of water markets and in its view, improved water management (Boelens et al. 2005). Mainstream common property resources theory tends to overlook the question of social inequity in resource access and management (McCay and Jentoft 1998, Mehta et al. 1999), taking for granted the irrigation technology's development and construction, and oversimplifying conceptualisations of communities, by assuming unity, homogeneity and solidarity, and by placing excessive faith in the effectiveness of local, traditional rights systems (Agrawal and Gibson 1999, Boelens et al. 2005). Alternative conceptualisations of irrigation, which can loosely be termed empowerment approaches, emphasise historical struggles that determine resource access and rights, and seek to show how formal and informal rules create and reinforce unequal access to common property resources, such as to the water supplied by hill irrigation systems. Property rights, including water rights, are

conceptualised as social relations between people, and are viewed as an important reflection of prevailing social relations of power. Differences in access to and control over irrigation water and other resources are recognised as a major determinant of wider social inequities and injustices (Boelens et al. 2005).

## **6. Social mobilisation: access to and control over resources**

We consider mobilization, a fourth sense of mobility, pertaining to developmental issues. Mobilisation, or social mobilisation, can be defined as groups of actors mobilising themselves and the necessary resources to achieve certain political, economic and/or cultural ends. Etzioni (1968: 243) defines mobilisation as “a process in which a social unit gains relatively rapidly in control of resources it previously did not control”. Social movements are important instances of mobility in its sense as social mobilisation, as for example are water users organising themselves to petition their government representatives, or non-state agencies such as NGOs for funds. Of relevance to our understanding of mobilisation is a belief, following Appadurai (1996), that in contemporary group politics conceptions of the future – through perhaps a mobility of ideas – play a far larger role than ideas of the past. Thus while we take history seriously, especially for the context it provides, much of our research aims to engage with issues and ideas located in the present, and perhaps the future.

Related to the Iranian governmental engagements to bring in regional development in its eastern provinces, there are efforts to encourage private investments from inside and outside of Iran. Local people are responding to the new opportunities in different ways: a small minority is mobilising capital and social networks to have access to resources and profit from the economic development, while others have limited success due to the range of institutional constraints which continue to constitute barriers to their aspirations for development. In any case, the current modernization ambitions of the government and business entrepreneurs, the growing mechanization of old-established economic sectors and the establishment of new small medium-scale industries, have all affected the natural environment as well as social relations, and the direction and orientation of economic interdependencies. Project D2 will elaborate how the exploration of natural resources and the opening of the area for industrial use on a large scale have generated social mobilisation and resulted in growing competition for resources in general and natural resources in particular.

Project D3 seeks to take account of the perspectives and priorities of water users, and in doing so considers the range of tasks that irrigation system users must perform. These include tasks of internal organisation, of regulation and authorisation, of operational water management, of reconstructing infrastructure, and importantly, of mobilising and administering resources. Mobilisation is necessarily both internal and external, i.e. water users must mobilise their own economic, material, labour, agricultural and informational resources on a day-to-day and year-to-year basis, to ensure that their irrigation systems continue to function; but they must also mobilise resources from external state and non-state agencies, most notably financial, material and technical resources, because of the earlier-outlined demographic, livelihood and value system changes taking place within communities. Mobilisation also occurs when water users are threatened by other potential water users, be they the state (e.g. wanting to develop hydro-power) or neighbouring villagers (e.g. wanting to create new canal systems to open up new land for irrigated agriculture).

In the Himalaya, trans-Himalaya and Karakoram, for example, project D3 shows how the administrative set-up of the colonial state and its interaction with water-using communities had several implications on water management. In the British colonial period the emergence of the district court and the creation of the *Riwaj-i-Abpashi* (book of irrigation customs), helped to create a new arena within which contested social claims to water could be negotiated. The courts operated according to a different logic to that which had previously existed, and once the skills, organisation and forms of expertise were developed, local groups came to use this arena to advance claims against rival claimants (e.g. other groups sourcing irrigation water from the same mountain stream). Baker (2005: 131-132) shows how, when in the 1980s the Indian state's *Irrigation and Public Health Department* (IPHD) attempted to expand an upstream canal, threatening the water supply of the farmers of a downstream canal, the latter group formed a canal committee and successfully sued the IPHD, hinging their lawsuit on their rights (defined earlier by the colonial state) in the *Riwaj-i-Abpashi*. Baker also highlights another kind of 'social mobilisation' – negotiation at the state-societal interface. *Gram Panchayats* (elected councils) for the irrigated areas under some canals negotiated with the IPHD for it to assume responsibility for canal management under the Himachal Pradesh Minor Canals Act. This act authorises the IPHD to "assume the control and/or management of any canal if the owner(s) of the canal consents thereto", though this authority can return to the owners upon their request any time (Baker, 2005: 242, footnote 10). The state government's management of such canals is essentially a direct and total subsidy, for the state is yet to collect any tax from command area water-users (Baker 1997, 2005); another example of state-making. One further example of 'social mobilisation' is the modification of operational rules and governance structure by communities, e.g. the formation of committees (with varied structures, functions, and effectiveness) to facilitate the acquisition of government funds for the repair of canals.

One surprising insight here, made by Baker (2005: 165), is that the organisational template irrigators adopted for their canal committees resembles the organisational form Hispano irrigators utilised in the American Southwest when they incorporated their irrigation systems in the 1960s. This was not a coincidence. Berry (2003, cited in Baker 2005) shows how in the early 1950s international development agencies exported to newly independent India the same 'progressive' agricultural development model that the US Agricultural Extension Service had promulgated in North America. The Punjab Cooperatives Department in Kangra (Himalayan foothills) had taken up this model and organised the two earliest canal committees in the early 1950s, as part of their effort to spread green revolution technologies, subsidise inputs and improve access to credit. This example serves to highlight not only social mobilisation processes at the micro-level, and the international transfer of development models and knowledge, but also as a reminder that the globalisation of water resources management is not a new phenomenon.

## **7. Methodological issues for the study of mobility and development**

Research in project D1 is integrated into a design related to 'multi-sited ethnography' (Marcus 1995), which is applicable, first of all, within research of mobility and exchange processes organised in networks. Marcus' concept to "examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects (and identities) in diffuse time-space" (Marcus 1995: 96) fits well for research on the interconnectedness of everyday-life social practice of small-scale traders in multiple settings and representations of modernisation in the borderlands of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Xinjiang. Thus, we are linking the

venues of commercial activities of the traders, be it the hub bazaars in Almaty, Bishkek and Urumqi, sewing manufacturers in East-Coast China or the border post in-between, by multi-sited research in order to get a deeper understanding of how the large-scale concept of modernisation is represented in, challenged and shaped by small-scale trade at the local scale.

Self-evidently, this methodological approach using participant observation, semi- and unstructured interviews holds a number of difficulties. First of all, the often illegal, but licit nature of cross-border small-scale trade activities requires from the researcher, first and foremost, a high degree of trust, which can be achieved only by sensitivity and openness (van Schendel 2005: 47). Hub bazaars in Bishkek and Almaty, as the central nodes in the networks of individual trade entrepreneurs, were chosen as the starting points during initial fieldwork (August/September 2011 and March-May 2012), to get access to traders. These bazaars are often deemed places of disorder and criminal behaviour in public opinion and particularly in official reading. Surprisingly though, a considerable number of interviewed traders (both in retail and wholesale), even if they were deeply involved in black- and grey-scale practices, appeared to be helpful and open-minded to inquiries, giving in-depth information as well as willing to provide further contacts. Upcoming research steps are to follow in particular the channels of supply of Almaty- and Bishkek-based traders from production facilities across border posts to hub bazaars. In proceeding with the research in this direction, an in-depth understanding of the interaction between actors in the other major nodes of small-scale networks is sought. Furthermore, the project aims to look at the negotiation of and contextual positioning of traders within modernisation processes in various venues.

In project D2 the web of relations and interactions of 'agents of change': traders, artisans and entrepreneurs will be documented through presence in the field and in-depth interviewing in various localities along Iran's eastern borders, mainly in two localities: in the province of Khorassan near the Afghanistan border and Sistan/Baluchestan next to the Pakistan border. Specific attention will be given to the network embeddedness of such 'agents of change', and to their role in managing and structuring enterprise, creativity and innovation. To document and analyze the web of relations and interactions, network studies will be used, as this form of analysis is especially appropriate for collecting network data from a target population that is a small percentage of a population, and whose relations are not concentrated in a single social structure (Bruyat, 1994).

Particularly the collection of individual life-history accounts and those of families from different ethnic and local origins will be used to produce a dynamic ethnographic representation of how different groups negotiate information and construct knowledge systems within expanding and changing network systems (Greenfield and Strickon 1986). In-depth interviews will provide access to life histories and allow understanding of how experiences in everyday life influence social relations (Bouwen and Steyaert 1997). The thick description and in-depth ethnographic data will provide the necessary material to focus analysis on the social realities of everyday life as it is perceived and lived by the local population. The ethnographic material will be analyzed by taking up the relevant theoretical discussions, related to transborder, transregional trade activities and migration, entrepreneurship, development, social mobility and social change.

Project D3 aims to compare and contrast the contemporary living conditions and livelihood challenges of the water users of hill irrigation systems across the vast mountainous region stretching from the Alai in southern Kyrgyzstan to the trans-Himalaya in northwestern India. Methodological challenges are faced in both primary and secondary research on this topic. Primary research, using

ethnographic methods, is made difficult by the vastness of the region, and the trouble incurred when travelling between and even to research sites. Research has so far been undertaken in the Kyrgyz Alai and the Tajik Pamir, which has involved numerous 12 to 20 hour car journeys in shared taxis; and a trip has been made to the Indian trans-Himalaya. Practical difficulties are incurred in finding suitable research assistants for short term study periods, and for overcoming language barriers. While the Tajik Pamir and Kyrgyz Alai can be studied together, albeit with two consecutive 12 hour journeys to get from Osh to Khorog, the Pakistani Karakoram and the Indian trans-Himalaya have to be visited on separate occasions, because there is no way to physically travel between the Pamir and Karakoram, or the Karakoram and Himalaya. Add to these the issue of accessibility: roads to and from high altitude mountain valleys are closed for between four and six months of the year, and agricultural seasons fall between the months of April/May and September/October (five to seven months). These challenges reduce the time available for interacting with water users, which makes problematic the building of trust with respondents, and thus the nature of the primary material that can be generated, especially concerning such a politically sensitive issue as relations of access and control over irrigation-related resources.

The use of secondary research material in project D3 is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, whatever studies that exist have been undertaken using different ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies, which make their comparison difficult. Secondly, there is a dearth of relevant information available for understanding the human dimension in development processes in high-mountain areas: it is difficult to obtain comparative data and to differentiate mountain societies within nation-states from other parts of a country's aggregated data (Kreutzmann 2006). Less problematic is the Pakistani Karakoram and Indian trans-Himalaya, for many research studies have been undertaken in these valleys, and archival material dating back to the British colonial period is in English language. For the Alai and Pamir however, few studies have been conducted on hill irrigation, and whatever does exist is difficult to unearth. Kreutzmann (2000), in reference to a study by Fourniau (2000), refers to irrigation-related research deficits in the Turkic and Tajik speaking regions of Central Asia. Located studies must also be translated to the English language.

For the study of social keywords, as a minimum two discourse levels will be analyzed within the project: the public discourse which is held on relevant phenomena in mass media and the (private) discourse which is held in every day communication by people who are affected more or less directly by the relevant phenomena. Correspondingly, the selection of key words and the analysis of their use will be based both on written sources (journalism, lexicographical studies and other scientific publications of relevance, political propaganda and other ideological pamphlets) and on oral sources (TV talk shows and other recorded presentations, narrations and samples of every day communication). The latter material will help to study the discourse held by persons who are affected more or less directly by the phenomena in question. The collection of this material is the most difficult task of the research project. Interviews – guided or not – can partly give access to every day communication, but a subject needs to be defined first and this subject should allow revelation of the words which are key words for the interviewed persons and not for the interviewer. Moreover the experience shows that many Afghans have learned to tell outsiders what they believe an outsider wants to hear. Therefore the interviews must be as innocuous as possible. It could be a promising strategy to embed these interviews in dialect studies because language studies are a plausible matter in the eyes of most potential informants and dealing with language means to deal with a subject

which affects the informants emotionally in most cases. Moreover this allows the possibility to include as many regions of Afghanistan into the project as possible.

## **8. Summary**

In academia, the end of the dominance of unitary theories of progress (e.g. modernisation and dependency theory), and in the development field the (at least partial) absorption of the post-development critique of the aid industry, has led to an increased interest in the contextuality and contingency of development processes, and to a questioning of the instrumentalist approaches to policy and other forms of public action. This translates, in the Crossroads Asia research programme, into an interest in diversity, plurality of viewpoints, and the primacy of localised experiences and discourses when investigating change (or development) processes. We consider change the norm, facilitated as it is by the seemingly increasing mobility of people, resources and ideas across space and time frames, ever reducing in proximity due to technological innovations and progress.

The research projects detailed in the preceding sections interrogate and interact with the notions of development introduced in sections 1 and 2 in different ways, though common threads can be found within them. Broadly speaking, we seek to examine the complex interactions of cultural, economic and political development/change, in some cases relating to state and non-state led development projects, but also to examine and highlight how people themselves – through their mobility – challenge governmental and international models of development, carving out their own present and future paths. Mobility, as we understand it, can be either spatial (migration, education, urbanisation), social (accumulation of capital, local investments), or taken on forms of mobilisation (organisation to access resources); and it also relates to a mobility of ideas, knowledge and other resources, from the global to the local scale and vice versa.

We are conscious that actors' positionality plays a great role in understandings of development, which is why our research projects place great value on interactions between the researcher and local actor. We refrain from carelessly using the term development, due to the term's problematic nature. However we do not shy away from engaging with development intervention practices, which we view as objective entities that cannot be wished away, and which must be studied and understood. In relation to this, local people's views and imaginaries need to be highlighted.

In conclusion, we wish to challenge conventional understandings of development (e.g. economic growth, state-led top-down development), to take an approach which gives equal emphasis to the political, cultural and economic aspects of societal change. The concept of development in wake of globalising processes is 'deterritorialised' to break from a statist or nation-state centric analysis, and socio-spatial notions of mobilities, networks, places, scales and positionalities are brought in to complement territorial notions, to reconsider the relationship between space and development issues, and between the state and society. In our research we aim to highlight the role of diversity and innovations in development processes, such as heterogeneity in managing livelihood strategies, and the ways in which local development processes become linked to national, regional and global representations.

## Bibliography

Agrawal, A. and Gibson, C.C. (1999): Enchantment and Disenchantment: The Role of Community in Natural Resource Conservation. *World Development* 27, 629-649.

Appadurai, A. (1996): *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Baker, J.M. (1997): Common Property Resource Theory and the Kuhl Irrigation Systems of Himachal Pradesh, India. *Human Organisation* 56, 199-208

Baker, M. (2005): *The Kuhls of Kangra. Community-Managed Irrigation in the Western Himalayas*. New Delhi: Permanent Black.

Baumann, Z. (1992): *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London. Routledge

Berry, K. (2003): Lakshmi and the Scientific Housewife: A Transnational Account of Indian Women's Development and Production of an Indian Modernity. *Economic and Political Weekly* 38 (11): 1055-68.

Boelens, R. (2008a): From Universal Prescriptions to Living Rights: Local and Indigenous Water Rights Confront Public-Private Partnerships in the Andes. In: *Journal of International Affairs* 61, 127-144.

Boelens, R. (2008b): *The Rules of the Game and the Game of the Rules: Normalisation and Resistance in Andean Water Control*. The Netherlands: Wageningen University.

Boelens, R., Getches, D., Guevara, A. (2010): *Out of the Mainstream: Water Rights, Politics and Identity*. London/Washington D.C.: Earthscan/Routledge.

Boelens, R., Zwarteveen, M. and Roth, D. (2005): Legal Complexity in the Analysis of Water Rights and Water Resources Management. In Roth, D., Boelens, R. and Zwarteveen, M., editors, *Liquid Relations: Contested Water Rights and Legal Complexity*, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1-20.

Bray, F. (1986): *The Rice Economies: Technology and Development in Asian Societies*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Bruyat, C. (1994): Contributions épistémologiques au domaine de l'entrepreneuriat. *Revue Française de Gestion*, 101, 113-125

Castells, M. (2001): *Der Aufstieg der Netzwerkgesellschaft. Teil 1 der Trilogie: Das Informationszeitalter*. Opladen: Leske+Budrich.

Chang, F. and Rucker-Chang, S. (eds.) (2012): *Chinese Migrants in Russia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe*. London and New York: Routledge.

Christian, D. (2000): Silk Roads or Steppe Roads?: The Silk Roads in World History. In: *Journal of World History* 11 (1): 1-26.

Dannreuther, R. (2003): Bridging the Gulf? Iran, Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. In: *The Review of International Affairs* 2 (4): 32-46.

D'Souza, R. (ed.) (2012): *Environment, Technology and Development: Critical and Subversive Essays*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

De Haas, H. (2008): *Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective*. IMI working paper no. 9. Oxford. Download: [www.imi.ox.ac.uk/publications/imi-working-papers/wp-9-2007-migration-and-development-a-theoretical-perspective](http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/publications/imi-working-papers/wp-9-2007-migration-and-development-a-theoretical-perspective) (accessed November 24, 2011).

De Vries, P. (2007): Don't Compromise your Desire for Development! A Lacanian/Deleuzian Rethinking of the Anti-Politics Machine. In: *Third World Quarterly* 28(1): 25-43.

Di Cosmo, N. (1999): State Formation and Periodization in Inner Asian History. In: *Journal of World History* 10 (1): 1-40.

Escobar, A. (1992): Planning. In: Sachs, W. (ed.): *The Development Dictionary. A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. London: Zed Books: 132-145.

Escobar, A. (1995): *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Ferguson, J. (1990): *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development,' Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fourniau, V. (2000): Some Notes on the Contribution of the Study of Irrigation to the History of Central Asia. In Kreutzmann, H., editor, *Shared Water. Irrigation and Water Management in the Hindukush - Karakoram – Himalaya*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 32-54.

Gardner, K., Lewis, D. (1996): *Anthropology, Development and the Post-modern Challenge*. London: Pluto Press.

Giddens, A. (1984): *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Greenfield, S. and Strickon, A. (1986): (ed.). *Entrepreneurship and Social Change*. Lanham and New York

Grillo, R.D., and Stirrat, R.L (1997): *Discourses of Development: Anthropological Perspectives*. Oxford: Berg.

Haraway, D. (1998): Situated Knowledges: The Science Question and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. In: *Feminist Studies*, 14: 575-599.

Houben, V., Schrempf, M. (eds.) (2008): *Figurations of Modernity. Global and Local Representations in Comparative Perspective*. Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag.

Jacques, M. (2012): *When China Rules the World*. London: Penguin.

Jessop, B. and Oosterlynck, S. 2008: Cultural political economy: On making the cultural turn without falling into soft economic sociology. *Geoforum* 39, 1155-1169.

Jessop, B., Brenner, N. and Jones, M. (2008): Theorising sociospatial relations. In: *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26, 389-401.

- Kaiser, M. (1997): Usbekische Kleinhändler im Transformationsprozess. Sociology of Development Research Centre Bielefeld, Working Paper No. 277. Bielefeld.
- Kreutzmann, H. (2000): Introduction. In Kreutzmann, H., editor, *Sharing Water. Irrigation and Water Management in the Hindukush - Karakoram – Himalaya*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 9-12.
- Kreutzmann, H. (2006): People and mountains: Perspectives on the human dimension of mountain development. *Global Environmental Research* 10, 49-61.
- Kreutzmann, H. (2009): Great Game in the Pamirian Knot - Geopolitical Impact and long-lasting effects In: *Karakoram Knowledge Highways – Development and Research Journal* 1 (2), pp. 9-25
- Leitner, H., Sheppard, E., Sziarto, K.M. (2008): The Spatialities of Contentious Politics. In: *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33, 157-172.
- Long, N. (1992): Introduction. In: Long, N., Long, A., (eds.): *Battlefields of Knowledge. The Interlocking of Theory and Practice in Social Research and Development*. London: Routledge, 3-15.
- Long, N. (2001): *Development Sociology: Actor Perspectives*. London: Routledge
- Maleki, A. (2009): Iran <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/GCA/GCAPUB-06.pdf> (accessed August 2011)
- McCay, B.J., Jentoft, S. (1998): Market or Community Failure? Critical Perspectives on Common Property Research. *Human Organisation*, 57, 21-9.
- Mehta, L., Leach, M., Newell, P., Scoones, I., Sivaramakrishnan, K., Way, S. (1999): Exploring Understandings of Institutions and Uncertainty: New Directions in Natural Resource Management. *IDS Discussion Paper 372*: Institute of Development Studies, Brighton.
- Mehta, L. (2005): *The Politics and Poetics of Water: The Naturalisation of Scarcity in Western India*, New Delhi, Orient Longman.
- Marcus, G. (1995): Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography. In: *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 95-117.
- Mollinga, P.P. (2003): *On the Waterfront: Water Distribution, Technology and Agrarian Change in a South Indian Canal Irrigation System*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Norberg-Hodge, H. (1991): *Ancient Futures. Learning from Ladakh*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Nyberg-Sørensen, N., Van Hear, N., Engberg-Pedersen, P. (2002): *The Migration-Development Nexus: Evidence and Policy Options*. IOM Migration Research Series. Geneva.
- Robinson, W.I. (2002): Remapping Development in Light of Globalisation: From a Territorial to a Social Cartography. In: *Third World Quarterly* 23 (6): 1047-1071.
- Schmidt, M. (2008): Land Use, Land Administration and Land Rights in Shigar, Baltistan. In Beek, M.V., Pirie, F., editors, *Modern Ladakh: Anthropological Perspectives on Continuity and Change*, Leiden: Brill, 243-265.

Scott, J.C. (1985): *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Sheller, M. and Urry, J. (2006): The new mobilities paradigm. In: *Environment and Planning A* 38: 207-226.

Spector, R. (2008): *Protecting Property: The Politics of Bazaars in Kyrgyzstan*. Ann Arbor: Umi Dissertations.

Thomas, A. (2000): Development as Practice in a Liberal Capitalist World. In: *Journal of International Development* 12 (6): 773-787.

Urry, J. (2007): *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Van Schendel, W. (2005): Spaces of Engagement: How Borderlands, Illicit Flows, and Territorial States Interlock. In: Abraham, I. and van Schendel, W. (eds.): *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders and the Other Side of Globalization*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: IUP.

## Information on the competence network *Crossroads Asia*

The competence network *Crossroads Asia* derives its name from the geographical area extending from eastern Iran to western China and from the Aral Sea to northern India. The scholars collaborating in the competence network pursue a novel, 'post-area studies' approach, making thematic figurations and mobility the overarching perspectives of their research in *Crossroads Asia*. The concept of figuration implies that changes, minor or major, within one element of a constellation always affect the constellation as a whole; the network will test the value of this concept for understanding the complex structures framed by the cultural, political and socio-economic contexts in *Crossroads Asia*. Mobility is the other key concept for studying *Crossroads Asia*, which has always been a space of entangled interaction and communication, with human beings, ideas and commodities on the move across and beyond cultural, social and political borders. Figurations and mobility thus form the analytical frame of all three main thematic foci of our research: conflict, migration, and development.

- Five sub-projects in the working group **"Conflict"** will focus upon specific localized conflict-figurations and their relation to structural changes, from the interplay of global politics, the erosion of statehood, and globalization effects from above and below, to local struggles for autonomy, urban-rural dynamics and phenomena of diaspora. To gain a deeper understanding of the rationales and dynamics of conflict in *Crossroads Asia*, the sub-projects aim to analyze the logics of the genesis and transformation of conflictual figurations, and to investigate autochthonous conceptions of, and modes of dealing with conflicts. Particular attention will be given to the interdependence of conflict(s) and mobility.
- Six sub-projects in the working group **"Migration"** aim to map out trans-local figurations (networks and flows) within *Crossroads Asia* as well as figurations extending into both neighboring and distant areas (Arabian Peninsula, Russia, Europe, Australia, America). The main research question addresses how basic organizational and functional networks are structured, and how these structures affect what is on the move (people, commodities, ideas etc.). Conceptualizing empirical methods for mapping mobility and complex connectivities in trans-local spaces is a genuine desideratum. The aim of the working group is to refine the method of qualitative network analysis, which includes flows as well as their structures of operation, and to map mobility and explain mobility patterns.
- In the **"Development"**-working group four sub-projects are focusing on the effects of spatial movements (flows) and interwoven networks at the micro level with regard to processes of long-term social change, and with a special focus on locally perceived livelihood opportunities and their potential for implementation. The four sub-projects focus on two fundamental aspects: first, on structural changes in processes of transformation of patterns of allocation and distribution of resources, which are contested both at the household level and between individual and government agents; secondly, on forms of social mobility, which may create new opportunities, but may also cause the persistence of social inequality.

The competence network understands itself as a mediator between the academic study of *Crossroads Asia* and efforts to meet the high demand for information on this area in politics and the public. Findings of the project will feed back into academic teaching, research outside the limits of the competence network, and public relations efforts. Further information on *Crossroads Asia* is available at [www.crossroads-asia.de](http://www.crossroads-asia.de).

### **Publications in the Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series**

- Marsden, Magnus (2011): Mobile Life on the Frontiers of Crossroads Asia. In: Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series, No. 1.
- Schetter, Conrad (2012): Translocal Lives. Patterns of Migration in Afghanistan. In: Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series, No. 2.
- Ismailbekova, Aksana (2012): Coping Strategies: Public Avoidance, Migration, and Marriage in the Aftermath of the Osh Conflict, Fergana Valley. In: Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series, No. 3 (Upcoming)
- Hill, Joe (2012): Community-managed Hill and Mountain Irrigation across Crossroads Asia: Between Autonomy and State Control. In: Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series, No. 4.
- Ibrahim, Niamatullah (2012): Shift and Drift in Hazara Ethnic Consciousness. The Impact of Conflict and Migration. In: Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series, No. 5.

### **Crossroads Asia Concept Papers**

- Working Group Conflict (2012): Conflict Research on Crossroads Asia – A Conceptual Approach. In: Crossroads Asia Concept Paper Series, No. 1.
- Working Group Development (2012): Development at the Crossroads. Development Research on Crossroads Asia – a conceptual approach. In: Crossroads Asia Concept Paper Series, No. 2.
- Working Group Migration (2012): Crossroads Asia through the Lens of Mobility and Migration: A Conceptual Approach. In: Crossroads Asia Concept Paper Series, No. 3. (Upcoming)