Anthropology and inclusive development

Laurens Bakker[*] and Gerben Nooteboom[*]

Although the term inclusive development is still rare in anthropological texts, it is a key element of anthropology's relation to development. Concerns of in/exclusion, unequal power relations and (lack of) voice are central here. Anthropology's encounter with development primarily focuses on a critical engagement with 'big D-development', -post-war practices and policies of intervention and 'improvement' – and 'little d-development' – as a geographically uneven, contradictory and historical process. Through ongoing discussions in anthropology on social exclusion, natural resource management, security and the role of business in neoliberal development, we review anthropology's engagement with inclusive development. We conclude that anthropology's prime contribution to inclusive development is the understanding that processes of inclusion and exclusion are not only caused by the outside interventions of 'big D-development', but also shaped and created by people's own actions, desires and cultural preferences.

Address
Department of Anthropology of the University of Amsterdam, P.O. Box 15509, 1001 NA Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Corresponding author: Bakker, Laurens (L.G.H.Bakker@uva.nl)
[*] Both authors are members of the Moving Matters research group of the AISSR at the University of Amsterdam.

Introduction

Anthropological engagement with development evolved along two main lines. The first of these refers to the idea of development as *progress* instigated by interventions such as reform, knowledge transfer, modernization, planning, and investment. This approach to development, known sometimes as 'big D-development' [1], is criticized for having the Global North continuing to control processes of change in developing countries. It is seen as neo-colonial, and as concealing international political and economic strategies of control even after the end of colonialism [2,3]. Anthropological critiques of this approach of development decried it as being evolutionary, Euro-American-centrist, and as oversimplifying human similarities at the expense of differences between cultures and societies [4**,5–7]. Such critique also led to the questioning of anthropology's own colonial roots and to serious consideration of the value and validity of anthropology in assisting developing countries [2,3,8]. A second line of anthropological engagement with development is the critical study of development *processes* as historical and endogenic processes that produce contradictory outcomes shaped by and creating social relations of inequality and social in/exclusion. Such 'little d-development', connotes a 'geographically uneven, profoundly contradictory set of historical processes' [1] and refers to broad, unfolding processes of global change, specifically to capitalism. It differs from 'big D-Development' insofar as the latter pertains to development ideas, policies and practices aimed to achieve progress [4**,9]; whereas little d-development views development as an *unintentional practice* that also entails the study of immanent processes of development [5,1]. This critical anthropology of development seeks to understand development in terms of structural processes as well as in terms of interaction between various actors and systems of knowledge [5,6,10,11]. The 'little d-development' approach thus brings relational, unintended and bottom-up factors into the process of development that 'big D-development' seeks to control. Anthropologists working on development often study both, but differ in their approaches. What unites many anthropologists' engagements with development is an interest in and in-depth understanding of the parties involved: their interests, needs, mutual relations, abilities to benefit or the causes of their failure to do so [12]. Anthropologists find themselves studying the local contexts in which 'big-D' and 'small-d' development meet, and where 'engaged universals' [13] and buzzwords such as 'human rights', 'sustainable development' and 'security' are used to articulate difference, mobilize claims to resources, or to forge alliances with global networks.

The inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalized groups has been a central element throughout the history of anthropological approaches to development. This focus is shared with other fields such as gender studies and political economy, where researchers also noted that large, institutionally-driven development initiatives were controlled by elites and did not trickle down to reach those on the margins. In the 1980s and 1990s efforts at countering exclusion and social, economic and political inequality were attempted through 'empowerment' projects [14–16], through 'participation' in the 1990s [17,18],

and by renewed attention for social exclusion in the new millennium [19–21]. These terms, and ensuing projects, were focused on breaching the barriers of structural inequality and power, but gradually lost their sensitizing and mobilizing powers as they proved hard to implement, and became mainstreamed and multi-interpretable. While today these buzzwords have lost most of their 'seductive power' for policy influencing [7,22], new buzzwords and themes emerge, in which the inclusion-exclusion debate remains central. At present, debates reflect a concern with the relation between development, inclusion, and exclusion and global business influence, given the turn towards non-state, business-driven neoliberal policies as the central tenet of increased global well-being. In what follows, we present a brief review of three areas in which these ongoing debates on land grabs, security, and business as development are articulated, and consider their relation to inclusive development.

Land grabs

Over the past decade, transnational companies began to invest globally in farmland and other natural resources on an unprecedented scale. Often, the lands they obtained were not wild or empty but in use by small farmers or nomadic peoples whose subsistence was directly threatened by the loss of access to this land. In anthropology, the resulting precarization of rural livelihoods is being researched in terms of land grabs, food (in)security, and extractive commodity chains, a central theme being the exclusion of small scale farmers and indigenous peoples. As case research around the globe identified the risks, tensions, disadvantages and opportunities [23–27], the need for the inclusion of the interests of local people in transnational business developments and the need for a code of conduct for (international) corporations came to the fore as shared concerns of 'big D-development'. In the larger debate, this global development of local natural resources spurred new anthropologic consideration of marginalization, inclusion, and exclusion of marginalized people [28] with renewed attention for the roles of labour [28], land control [29,30,31•] and power [31•,32–34] in relations of resource access, livelihoods and the social resilience of social-ecological systems as part of global processes of capitalist development ('little d-development'). Yet, research also indicates an increasing awareness in business development of local populations, their resilience and ways to engage with them [27,34–37]. Although this does not result in overall inclusion of populations' needs, it begins to highlight questions of who among the local population is excluded (and who is not), how, why and with what consequences [38]. This demonstrates that inclusion and exclusion in land use rights are not mutually exclusive, but rather locality-specific, dynamic processes that are incited by (often global) economic, political and power structures yet also shaped by the desires and actions of individual people [36,38,39••].

Security

Following 9/11, security has become a prominent element of development practices manifested by providing 'human security' to individuals to secure them from fear or want [40], as well as by establishing control in frontier states and conflict areas in order to make them governable for state apparatuses [41]. These are inherently different approaches pursuing different outcomes for those involved. Whereas the human security approach focuses on individuals and populations, extending global values and rights to all, regardless of race, religion or creed, and thus effectively making everyone a citizen [40], the establishment of governance serves to render populations governable through 'pre-emptive development' [5,41] and thus to control them through state-based biopolitical practices. Combined, these approaches form 'big D-development' agendas in which the rule of law, justice, human rights and market reform are critical components of efforts to promote peace, stability and order. This results in new constellations of inclusion, and exclusion in which the global south receives development support in exchange for security in the Global North [5,8,41]. Processes of 'little d-development', such as southerners' increased mobility and initiative to make use of global infrastructures is limited by northern securitization of southern lives and opportunities. Anthropological studies of this security-development conjunction are critical of the effects of such comparatively rigid, well-ordered global 'big D-development' interventions. Such studies show that what entails security goes beyond narrow notions of the concept and concerns local, temporal and political specificities as well as human resilience and adaptation [42•,43,44]. Optimum results of inclusion, anthropologists argue, lie not in global biopolitics but in a focus on the understanding of processes in the cross-cultural study of security informed by empirically grounded research and the formulation of suitable concepts and tools to conjoin local circumstances with global principles and rights [43–46].

Corporate development

As foci of anthropologic attention in the debate on inclusion, and exclusion, land grabs and security share roots in post-turn-of-the-century global neoliberalism. Worldwide deregulatory adjustment and economic liberalization have realigned national development with nations' abilities to attract mobile capital to enclaves of production of labour-intensive goods for international markets [5,10,22]. Simultaneously, as explained above, transnational companies increased exploitation of natural resources in the Global South, thus creating the curious situation that while global northern security requirements put pressure on southern access to global infrastructure, northern economic interests require – and are granted – considerable access to the Global South as a source of labour and natural resources. This reshapes relations between stakeholders in trade and industrial sectors, as