

Masterarbeit:

## Brokerage in International Development

In concert with scholars from other disciplines, geographers have roundly criticised international development for entrenching neo-colonial relations between the Global North and Global South, or the majority world and the minority world. However, a binary perspective on the power relations created by international development glosses over the manner in which development can produce complex, site-specific configurations of power, in which there is often no straightforward answer to how wins and losses accrue to various actors. Think, for example, of activists who appreciate the international visibility that donor funding provides, even though they struggle to balance donors' demands with their desire to remain close to the people they represent. Or of village leaders who acquire new status and resources as a result of NGO funding; resulting in growing tensions and inequality. Other actors that occupy these liminal positions may include: religious groups, social enterprises, small businesses, and mutual aid associations.

This topic is **interested in the “in-between” spaces of international development**; occupied by actors that operate between donors and beneficiaries, centres and peripheries, and the local and global. The literature sometimes refers to these as brokers, who are ‘figures that connect disparate social worlds’ (Koster & van Leynseele 2018, 803). Using their knowledge, resources, and authority, brokers may act as gatekeepers, representatives, liaisons, guides, or coordinators. By examining one or more case studies, this research will provide a nuanced account of the power relations that drive international development today. In so doing, it will contribute to literature on the geographies of development and critical development studies by asking:

- Who “brokers” international development and how have these brokers changed over the years, according to larger shifts in international development (e.g. financialisation, South-South cooperation, cryptocurrencies and development, digital humanitarianism)?
- What power relations are development brokers embedded in, and to what extent can brokers challenge them? How do development brokers mediate between various scales and sites through which international development operates?
- What are appropriate theoretical and methodological tools for understanding development brokers in the world today?

Theses on this topic may be based on a combination of discourse analysis and in-person qualitative research. The latter may also involve an internship at a development organisation, both inside or outside Switzerland. If the student is interested, the supervisor has contacts in NGOs in Myanmar and Thailand. Interested students are welcome to discuss these options.

**Language:** English

Please get in touch with **Shona Loong** ([shona.loong@geo.uzh.ch](mailto:shona.loong@geo.uzh.ch)) if you are interested to write a Masters thesis on this topic.