

Alberto Arce



Globalisation from Below? Studying the possibilities of a cosmopolitanism perspective in development, resources and environmental studies.

My research interests in development studies are from a perspective rooted in the critical revival of social anthropology, across issues springing from development and environmental studies. Contemporary livelihoods, access to resources and peoples' wellbeing are important live force fields. Force fields are spaces, where actors, entities and things become assembled organising trajectories of existence. It is in these fields where we need to study actors' subjectivities, contemporary social relations and the constant re-shaping of our environments.

In these live-force-fields is where bodies, commodities and natural resources are constantly re-defined and re-positioned in the world. It is this vibrant mobility of 'entities and things' that entertains the possibility of understanding difference, identity, and policy', as part of a 'material', fluid and bodily (feeling/sensation) process. Such perspective is crucial to delineate the effects of global events and processes that are associated with people's affects, practices, objects, images, built forms and places. These entities and things come to be knowable in the 'world' through 'material' assemblages and in a 'mixture' of categories, memories, friends, strangers, legalities, tastes, information, and so on. Thus, a study of these entities and things is a line of study expressing a serious interest in describing and interpreting significant aspects of human life today.

Recent studies have examined how global processes work to maintain inequality and to control 'others' spaces, which cause a detrimental effect on local people's knowledge, power and actions. This line of enquiry is supplemented by questioning whether contemporary actors come to feel and express their 'agency' (i.e. fusion/confusion, forms of resistance/appropriation etc.). Thus, one issue is to what extent their practices effect objects, images, built forms, places and how these elements affect people. Are these expressions and feelings significant to understanding differences, identity and policy? And is it possible for these cases to be conceptualised as a globalisation from below?

This line of study is thus premised upon the 'assumption' that describing and analysing development and environmental case studies demands an understanding of how different processes of globalisation affect actors' claims, practices, agency and political mobilisations

in their locales. In exploring these processes, the relation between actors' agency, creativity and organising processes, in a variety of regions, are linked with globalising objects of knowledge such as public issues controversies, development policies and things like technologies, artefacts, images, materials and places. This creates the dissolution of the mechanical opposition between the global and the local.

In my view, this perspective offers the opportunity to describe and analyse political conflicts, local and global knowledge contests and the 'relevance' of cosmopolitical, pluralistic and multicultural policy orientations in a more flexible and dynamic manner. This is a point of entry to explore the political natures of contemporary social categories (i.e. gender, ethnicity and class). This position aims to approach international development and environmental studies through the questioning of assumed 'policy and practical' common assumptions. In short, new materialisms is a methodological and conceptual orientation that has sought to readdress the dominance of discourse analysis, repositioning the practical, sensorial and conceptual significance of objects and rethink the 'centrality' of social actors. Students who are willing to take part in this agenda of enquiry are welcome to work with me mainly in Latin America and Europe, but also Asia and Africa are not ruling out from the issue of how different societies are dealing with a mutable material world.

My current research focuses on the relationship between social science and natural knowledge strategies to favour multispecies coexistence. Another topic I study is heritage policies and their contribution to a redefinition of natural resources (i.e. the heritage biovalue of potatoes in Peru and the Netherlands), Population movements (migration) and the limits of multiculturalism. Further subject studies I focus in are the equity and environmental relevance of contemporary development initiatives from salmon farming in Chile, quinoa production in Bolivia to resource conflicts and mineral exploitation in Mexico. Also I am interested in social and environmental movements in processes of civic mobilisation around wind farming and local energy initiatives in Mexico, Chile and beyond.

BSc: THEMES FOR THESES

I am willing to supervise BSc theses on topics related to the contemporary materialities of development processes to document and critically assess the significance of basic categories such as: capital, labour, class, family, technology, space, knowledge, actors, gender, region, nature, social- policy, mobility, civic movements, elite and expert interventions, legal and illegal strategies of resistance, coping and negotiation etc.

BSc examples:

- *Family in Movement: transformation of the family in urban Mali and the Netherlands*
- *Quinoa Producers and quinoa exports: Implications for local consumption and diet in the Southern Highlands.*

- *Fair Trade: Local or Global commodity market?*
- *Knowledge, rights and nutrition. Towards a conceptualisation of livelihoods and wellbeing.*
- *Food Sovereignty: Between nationalist and cosmopolitan politics.*
- *The politic and conflicts of resources in Latin America.*
- *The impact of Secondhand Clothing in Africa.*

MSc: THEMES FOR THESES

MSc expectations:

I want to work with students who desire an opportunity to develop a skill and competence in working with ethnographic research in Latin America or in others social relevant locations. Students must be interested in theory and practice and they should be able to make sense of basic social change orientations and debates and are in possession of an enquiring and critical mind. In my view, education and research should be directed to enhance reflective processes to approach development practices and forms of self-organisation for social change.

Some MSc examples:

- *Saving a lot of lives? What professionals in India say and do about patent versus patients.*
- *Sustainable use of medicinal and aromatic plants in Brazil: linking gender, knowledge and power.*
- *Livelihood coping strategies of poor people in Bangladesh.*
- *Labour local relations in the Globalised world of fresh food and markets in Buenos Aires. Argentina.*
- *Modernity in the everyday practices of young Garifunas in Livingston, Guatemala.*
- *The Social significance of the Policy Process: The case of the program of acquisition of food from family agriculture (PAA) in Araraquara, Sao Paulo State, Brazil.*
- *The creation of Fluidity Actors and multities In Assembling practices: The case of Agriculture in the Ecuadorian Highland.*
- *The Globalisation of taste: the case of Salmon.*
- *An ethnography of the Canastas Comunitarias (food baskets) in Ecuador.*
- *Handicraft producers in Peru: Valuing fair trade among women.*
- *"If you are writing, you are still alive": The potential of Sumud and the 'Wall Museum' for the women of the Arab Educational Institute in Bethlehem, Palestine.*