

Governance and Inclusive Development: Vision, Themes and Approaches

GID vision

The global development context is changing rapidly. Transformations in political, environmental, economic, financial, technological, social, educational and cultural landscapes against the background of uneven development, rising inequality and extreme poverty contribute to deepening socio-ecological injustice. The international policy field too is changing. Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals address poverty and inequality of access to food, water, energy and other resources, inequality between and within states, while also attending to ecological challenges. Social movements are meanwhile battling the effects of liberalization. Our evolving collective scholarship engages critically and constructively with prevailing patterns of development and injustice to realize a more fair and sustainable world.

From Past to Future

The Governance and Inclusive Development (GID) programme group, which originated in the 1990s, continuously adapts its workfield to new societal challenges and insights, as well as staff capacities. In the past decade, its work focused on: environmental governance, urban governance, and education. Currently, GID studies *governance for environmental justice in the anthropocene*, *governance for social justice* and *the politics of knowledge* (see below).

GID Objectives

The GID group scrutinizes development dynamics at various geographical, jurisdictional and temporal scales, realizing that these are situated in different but interconnected multi-level processes; rethinks dominant development paradigms; and engages with international, national and local development practices, policies and debates to identify viable and socially and ecologically just alternatives. It thereby emphasizes that development pathways are affecting and affected by ‘planetary boundaries’ and climate change.

Governance for Inclusive Development

Our overarching theme combines two concepts: ‘governance’ and ‘inclusive development’. We see *governance* as both the object of study (i.e. how governance happens) and the subject of study (i.e. how to improve governance outcomes). We therefore see governance as both an analytical and as a normative tool. We engage in theories that conceptualize the relations between different actor groups (interactive/hybrid governance) and those that address problems characterized by a high degree of uncertainty (adaptive governance). We focus on policies, practices and contestations, and on the who, why, what and how of governance processes and outcomes. We analyze contradicting and mutually supporting policies and practices using a variety of analytical frameworks, including legal pluralism, social and gender justice, landscape approaches and wellbeing economics.

GID has been developing the concept of *inclusive development*. Inclusive development is distinct from sustainable development in that it does not emphasize economic (growth)

aspects and includes a relational component. Inclusive development is operationalized in terms of social inclusion (which focuses on human well-being, regenerative economics and society), ecological inclusion (as ecosystems are the ‘GDP of the poor’), and relational inclusion which examines the politics of relations from local to global level and includes a focus on reducing inequality. The paired term ‘inclusive development’ is also reflected in three viewpoints: (a) linear growth models are not compatible with ecological limits and the need to rethink these in terms of circular economies; (b) the need to redefine development in terms of human well-being, de-growth and post-development debates, regenerative economics, politics and society, and build on concepts from the global South such as *Ubuntu*, *bien vivir* and wellbeing; and (c) the growing inevitability to redistribute resources so as to reduce inequalities and ensure the fair distribution of rights, responsibilities and risks.

Three focus areas

Within the broad overarching theme, GID focuses on three areas recognizing that they interconnect and are linked:

- *Governance for environmental justice in the Anthropocene.* Under this topic, we analyse the interactions between society and nature’s contributions to people, ranging from access, rights and responsibilities to land, water and fish, through to exposure to ecological risks such as the impacts of climate change and disaster risk reduction. We assess how socio-environmental inequality and injustices are produced and reproduced in society through the entrenchment of dominant discourses and related technologies, infrastructures and instruments. We focus also on how to transition to a more sustainable future. Specific arenas include water, oceans/coasts, forests, climate change, peri-urban regions and cities.
- *Governance of social justice.* This topic addresses social inequalities, injustice and conflict. Under this theme, we analyse the discursive, structural and multi-level causes and dynamics of extreme poverty, inequality, injustice, food insecurity, and social and violent conflict. We analyse the role of gender through an intersectional lens; of different actors and social movements and their approaches to development; of different paradigms and theories concerned with social justice; and of technologies, instruments and infrastructure such as education, inclusive finance, wellbeing economics, sustainable peacebuilding and participation. Our scope includes situations of humanitarian crisis.
- *Politics of knowledge.* In studying the above, we also inquire into the politics of knowledge. Here we use an inclusive development lens to analyse development ideologies, hegemony, discourses and policy instruments from a diversified perspective, questioning whose knowledge counts and why, and how certain knowledges remain underrepresented in debates, policies and practices. We therefore strive to draw attention to alternative perspectives. Transdisciplinary research and the co-creation of knowledge are threads running through our research, as is the role of formal and non-formal education, such as in processes of peacebuilding. This implies that GID research is embedded in international networks of scholars, development practitioners, policymakers and civil society actors in order to co-create knowledge and create room for alternative thinking.

Geographies of GID

In terms of the geographies of our research, we focus on place, space, scale and human-nature relations. In terms of place, we focus on rural areas (farmlands, forests, coasts); on urban areas; and on places where they come together, in for example peri-urban areas, forested landscapes, and coastal zones also in connection with oceans. In terms of space, we focus on how governance activities shape material, conceived and representational space. In terms of scale, we look at both how governance practices manifest themselves at different scale levels as well as how these different scalar levels influence each other – in a politics of scale storyline. We focus on the Global South, changing North-South relations, and also sometimes investigate issues in the Global North. Our focus on place- and space-based inequality, economic inequality, and sustainability resonates with activities in the rest of the GPIO department.

Capacity building and mutual learning

GID has an active mentoring and PhD programme where we engage in mutual empowerment and capacity utilization of younger colleagues, including our large group of PhD candidates from other parts of the world. This exposure forces us to reflect on differentials in epistemic privilege and results in a questioning of received wisdoms.

GID Team: Diversity with a common goal

The GID team consists of thirteen scholars and educators with a diversity of nationalities and cultural affiliations (representing Europe, Asia and the US); a diversity of disciplines (including anthropology, geography, economics, public policy, international relations, law); a diversity of epistemological approaches/theories (e.g. critical realism, political ecology, political geography, legal anthropology and pluralism, critical legal theory/ third world approaches to international law, systems thinking, institutionalism); and a diversity of skills (where some focus more on teaching, guiding our MSc and PhD students into our areas of research, whereas others focus on primary and secondary research, theory-building and applied research). We are complemented by a group of six colleagues from the IHE Delft Institute for Water Education who work on the politics of water governance. We also have a small group of post-docs who find a temporary home with us. Finally, we have about sixty PhDs from all over the world who work on a range of issues that fall within our broader narrative. This diversity is our strength. We use this diversity to try and ‘put the last first’. In doing so, we hope to critically and constructively engage with and contribute to the further understanding and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and inclusive development more broadly.

GID Centres

GID hosts the Centre for Sustainable Development Studies (CSDS, est. 2015 [<https://csds.uva.nl/>]) and chairs the social-science Centre for Maritime Research (MARE, est. 2000 [<http://www.marecentre.nl/>]), each stimulating the vibrant intellectual exchange of knowledge through their biennial conferences and associated academic journals, newsletters and publication series.

GID Teaching Programmes

The GID research programme is connected to two master-level teaching programmes and one minor: the one-year MSc International Development Studies (MIDS; <https://gsss.uva.nl/content/masters/international-development-studies/international-development-studies.html>), the two-year Research Master's International Development Studies (RMIDS; <https://gsss.uva.nl/content/research-masters/international-development-studies-research/international-development-studies-research-msc.html>), and the Minor International Development Studies. It also runs master's courses on Advanced Environmental Geography.