



## **The Routledge Handbook of Global Development: Episode 2 with Jonathan Rigg and Nicola Banks**

This is a written transcription of the podcast 'The Routledge Handbook of Global Development: Episode 2' where Jonathan Rigg interviews Nicola Banks, the section editor for the book's section 'Game Changers of Global Development'

You can find the audio of the podcast below.

### **Soundcloud audio:**

**Jonathan Rigg** [00:00:00] We're discussing today the new Handbook of Global Development, which will be published later this month, that's February 2022, by Routledge. The book is a major publication of some 750 pages with over 60 separate entries. The project has been led by Dr. Kieran Sims, but today I am pleased to introduce and discuss the volume with one of the section editors, Dr Nicola Banks. Nikki is Senior Lecturer in Global Urbanism and Urban Development in the Global Development Institute at the University of Manchester. She works on urban poverty, employment and livelihoods and has a particular interest in development NGOs, and how they can play a transformative role in producing a more equitable system of international aid.

[00:00:49] My name is Jonathan Rigg and I am Professor of Development Geography in the School of Geographical Sciences at the University of Bristol, and I'm also one of the section editors. Nikki, it's a pleasure to have this opportunity to talk to you today about your section and about the book. Your role has been as an editor of a section entitled 'Game Changers', and that is what I want to focus on today. Of all the sections of the book, this is the one, I think, which has the most puzzling title 'Game Changers'. So, the first question that springs to mind is, so what were you thinking of, and looking for that justified the inclusion of an entry in your section? Or to put it another way, what makes a topic game changing in your view?

**Nicola Banks** [00:01:41] That's great. Thank you, Jonathan, and thank you for a very warm welcome. So for me, the idea of game changers became a part of how I conceptualised big challenges when I was living in Uganda and working with the NGO BRAC there. So for us, young people were a major development focus, both because of the size of the youth population and the scale of the problems that they face. So that's really, where the idea of game changers comes from. It's about these big shifts or these big issues that have the potential to make or break development outcomes at the local or the national or the global level, depending on whether, and how, they're supported by policy makers and by governments. Of course, things are not so binary as make or break in practise. There is a lot of nuance that we have to pay attention to, but that's really the basic idea that both the scale of the problem or the size of the problem means that these issues have to be a major development priority or else. That really is the idea at the heart of this section on game changers of global development. We wanted to look at the global

shifts taking place that can offer either big payoffs or massive challenges at scale, depending on how they are managed and supported or not.

**Jonathan Rigg** [00:03:02] Wonderful, thank you as well. Something else that I notice is that it's not just game changers, there's a question mark at the end of it. So it's Game Changers? question. So I was wondering, what were you...so obviously there's a possibility that some of the changes, which appear to be game changes, don't end up as such. Is that right? Is that what you were suggesting in adding a question mark to the end of the title?

**Nicola Banks** [00:03:29] Oh, that's a very good point. I think that's a fair assessment in the sense that things that you think are going to be big game changers turn out not to be later down the line, or in the case as we've seen in the last two years, things that we could never have predicted to, become the biggest game changers of all. So there is an element of prediction there, which I suppose is why it becomes a question, not a statement of fact.

**Jonathan Rigg** [00:03:57] Okay. Okay. I noticed looking down the list I think you've got 11 separate entries in your section. And I should also say that it wasn't just you editing the section, you were editing it with Jonathan Makuwira and the pair of you have got, as I say, 11 entries. I mean, some of them to me seem fairly, if I can put it this way, obvious. I mean, COVID 19 obviously has been a game changer, but others are sort of less, sort of more surprising...I mean you've got housing in there. So how do you mix up if you like the obvious and the not so obvious? I mean it comes back to this question I started with, which was what made it into this select group of 11 entries which come together collectively are game changing, potentially.

**Nicola Banks** [00:04:45] Yes, that's also a good question. I generally think of game changers as big shifts like urbanisation, creating a new potential. Housing is not a shift per se, but for us we conceptualised it as a game changer because it's such a crisis that the world is facing, in all corners. It's not a problem confined to the global South. It's not a problem confined to the global North. We have a global housing crisis that's as a result of...kind of financial crisis. It's a crisis of urban politics generally, and an urban question. And those two combined crises have left millions homeless and in financial desperation. So there is an acute lack of affordable housing in many corners of the globe in the world's cities. There's been this big shift in seeing housing as a social good or a social right, to housing as a valuable investment, and that has been a critical shift there with a game changing element because it's led to this crisis of unaffordable housing. I have a colleague at Manchester called Tom Gillespie, who has a chapter on another contribution in this section, and he talks about real estate being the new frontier of capitalist urban development. Because state land is commodified in these new ways that benefit real estate companies at the cost of urban residents at scale because they are not producing housing for the majority of urban residents. So that's where we saw housing as such a big make or break issue. So the contributors in this section on housing are Punam Devi and another about co-editors, Naohiro Nakamura. So they're looking at the causes and nature of the global housing crisis in general, and then using their experiences in Fiji to illustrate the challenges facing urban residents there, particularly around the idea of informality. That is perhaps one area where there are distinct dimensions to the housing crisis in the global south. The scale at which people are relying on the informal sector for housing, it does occur in the global north but not to the same extent.

**Jonathan Rigg** [00:06:55] Wonderful, thank you. I was wondering whether you could, if there were any other of the entries that was sort of, I suppose, pick out as illustrative or

exemplary of the points that you're trying to make in this section. So is there any, I mean I know picking up certain entries is something, which you'd prefer not to do, but I'm wondering, can you dig into any more in a little bit more detail?

**Nicola Banks** [00:07:19] Of course. I think I and both the audience will miss Jonathan's [Makuwira] contributions here because I know he was excited to talk about some of the contributions he particularly enjoyed. But I was going to come back to two chapters, but to treat them kind of together. And that is the chapters on ageing populations and on children in youth. So my colleague Penny Vera-Sanso so contributed a chapter on ageing and Vandra Harris Agisilaou, wrote on children and youth. I do have a bit of a bias here, I should say, because a large part of my research is focussed on youth and urban youth in particular. But I think what I really enjoyed when I read these chapters was you had that rare moment when reading academic work where throughout the whole paper, I just thought, "Yes, yes. Yes". And it's that feeling you get when you agree with everything that is being said and you just wish that you'd been able to articulate it so succinctly and effectively in a book chapter. So I was just really on board with the overall arguments, which are very similar across both very different parts of the population. So both Penny and Vandra talk about the fact that ageing populations and children and youth hold very well defined spaces in development thinking and practice; so we have U.N. agencies for children and youth, social protection systems that see ageing populations as a particular site of intervention. And yet at the same time, we have this contradiction where we don't know enough about them and we're not...we don't have enough contextual knowledge that lets us understand vulnerabilities at those particular stages in the life course. And that's because we treat these age categories in silos. So we look at ageing populations, we look at children, or we look at young people. In particular, in Penny's contribution, she argues about the fact that narrowing in in these very siloed areas is so dangerous, almost to the point of redundancy in many cultures around the world, where there is huge dependence within and across generations. We can't just look at one particular group and understand whether they are vulnerable or what type of vulnerabilities they face. Trying to understand poverty and disadvantage across the life course needs more than that. And she argues quite passionately that it's because we've had these traditional, particularly Western, frameworks for understanding these stages in the life course that we've missed really important contextual understandings. Societies around the world don't live up to these neoliberal models of individualistic societies, and we need a much more nuanced and decolonised study of ageing that recognise how ageing is socially produced. It's not just about age.

[00:10:10] The other thing that makes me particularly excited about these two chapters is that following on from this moment of 'Oh, this is great.' is that we're now building on them. And so the three of us are working together, given our mutual interests and these kind of parallels across our work, to look at life stages of children, young people and elderly across the life course and how they are so deeply interlinked. So some of the discussions we've been having and taking forward have been some of my research highlights of the last year. So that's been another bonus coming out of the book.

**Jonathan Rigg** [00:10:45] Nice. Nice. I mean that brings me to another sort of thought, which is, you know, how on earth do you assemble these authors and get them to contribute to an enterprise such as this? But also assemble authors which, if I can put it this way, aren't the usual suspects. Because of course, I mean, both you and I are working in a UK context and you know, we tend to, if you like, look next door or down the road and it's the same people writing, no doubt very well, about the things that we've had the right of speak about before. And I was wondering, how did you ensure that this section actually

embraced the full sort of myriad voices that we see around the world? How did you find your authors? I suppose I'm asking.

**Nicola Banks** [00:11:31] I guess answering that question requires starting from the very beginning of our discussion as the bigger editorial team, that it was really important to us that we had that as a central value. So we wanted to represent a much more diverse, far reaching set of authors and their perspectives on critical global development issues. And then Jonathan and myself, I guess you are both drawing upon different expertises broadly within the kind of topic of social development, but across very different areas. We have different networks to draw upon but actually, those networks weren't always the first port of call because, as you say, if you draw upon your own networks, you don't get that diversity. So we did an initial brainstorming came up with authors that were doing interesting or relevant work in those key areas and then approached them. It was a particularly difficult time, I guess, to approach authors. We had authors on board before the pandemic hit, but after the pandemic hit and caring responsibilities and new teaching pressures did mean that some pulled out. But by and large, it wasn't a problem for the section. So, yeah, we were so pleased with the contributing authors that we ended with and in particular, their magnificent contributions that you can pick up without any prior knowledge and learn about everything you need to know about these interesting potential game changers of global development.

**Jonathan Rigg** [00:13:01] So, I mean, if we can take a step back from the details of each of the individual entries and I mean, I see this one on health and illness, citizenship rights and global development, global value chains and development, international internal migration, forced migration, development and conflict and so on, so you've got a whole host of different themes. And I'm wondering if we take a step back from the detail, what do you think are the, if you like, the main lessons or points that come through in the section? So what would you say are, if you like, the sort of resonances between the different entries that you might sort of pull out of your section?

**Nicola Banks** [00:13:42] That is also a very good question. The two that jumped out to me would be the idea that we need to understand the social construction of some of these key issues. So when we think about policy issues like health services, we think about resources, we think about institutions, we think about structures, that both Stephanie Topp's chapter on COVID 19 and then Pranee and Zoe's chapter on health, something that I'd never really considered given that it's well outside my expertise, was how much all of these issues and problems associated with health are social issues, both the causes of health and the causes of health inequalities in experiencing ill health and in receiving treatment. And I think that's probably a parallel that drives, that runs through, most of the chapters on one level or another; is that by not recognising that in the traditional theories and frameworks that we use to understand many of these problems we're really missing the important factor, which is the social. The inequalities between different people across many of these outcomes, which are so critical to what we want to address. So that is one, and I did have another one, and it's completely...It's completely gone.

**Jonathan Rigg** [00:15:11] Well, maybe I can follow up with a question which might just jog your memory, which is, of course, when Kearnin approached us all, Kearnin Sims approached us all, inviting us to be section editors, something that he wanted to be sort of central to the book is a focus on one pedagogy, on educational learning. And I suppose that is one of the aspects of the book which distinguishes it from other handbooks of this form, which you can get at the moment. So I was wondering, thinking about students and pedagogy, what were you trying to, I mean, I don't know if this will jog your memory about

the thing that has slipped your mind, what were you trying to, if you like, sort of, the learning principles that you were trying to get across in your section?

**Nicola Banks** [00:16:03] So for me the focus on pedagogy was one of the things that really excited me about the handbook. I think it's definitely a unique selling point to our book, and particularly for this subsection on game changers of global development. I think that's even more of the case because for me, the pedagogical implications of these chapters is potentially game changing in themselves. So I think it's clear from these chapters that current and future professionals absolutely have to be taught in new and innovative ways that bring alternative voices and perspectives into the classroom. They have to be taught in ways that reflects the global realities of how millions of people around the world are accessing work, services, and of where they live. Across all of the chapters we're seeing that these ways of living, working, and accessing services rarely fit into to Western models of how things work and the theories that we have that have dominated thinking and practises. So we have a responsibility as teachers to bring different voices into the classroom, to bring different insights.

[00:17:11] There are really important things I wanted to reflect on here that come out from our chapters. So Jonathan Makuwira in his chapters on disability and development, talks about the need for 'unlearning' of our knowledge and our behaviours. And how we, as teachers, can support that practise in our classroom. I think it's also important to say that that has to be done in a very thoughtful way, not just in a provocative way, but in a way that supports students through that process. There's another chapter by Jessica Hawkins on conflict that outlines a really wonderful pedagogy of teaching conflict and development. And as part of that, she highlights how important it is to consider the potential mental health burdens of students in the classroom when learning about something that is sensitive and could be trauma inducing.

[00:17:59] And then another thing that excites me pedagogically from the chapters is that idea of bringing alternative voices into the classroom, or taking students outside of the classroom to talk to alternative voices. So in their chapter, Diana Mitlin and colleagues highlight the impacts that bringing community activists from informal settlements in Nairobi into the classroom at the University of Manchester has on the learning experience, and the types of knowledge, that students get through these new voices and new eyes. And likewise, Poonam and Naohiro highlight the benefits of their field lab approach. They take planning students out of the classroom into this living lab of informal settlements in Fiji so they can learn about the realities of informal housing. And I think that kind of place based or people based learning can be particularly powerful pedagogically, if we like alliteration.

[00:18:54] But I think for me there just to round up the discussion of global development 'game changers' is that ultimately, if we want our future planners, our future professionals to be able to address these global development challenges, how can they do that if they don't understand these lived experiences? Or how can they rectify the continued tendency for professionals to continue to design programmes from the outside, while excluding the solutions devised by low income communities around the world?

**Jonathan Rigg** [00:19:24] That's a wonderful way to end this discussion. Thank you, Nikki, for a fascinating foray into what you are seeking to achieve with this section of the Routledge Handbook of Global Development. Thank you.

**Nicola Banks** [00:19:39] Thank you, everyone. I hope you enjoy the handbook. There's something for everyone.

