



## **The Routledge Handbook of Global Development: Episode 3 with Kearnin Sims, Albert Salamanca and Pichamon Yeophantong**

This is a written transcription of the podcast 'The Routledge Handbook of Global Development: Episode 3' where lead author Kearnin Sims interviews Albert Salamanca and Pichamon Yeophantong, section editors for the book's section 'Sustainability and Environment'.

You can find the audio of the podcast below.

**Soundcloud audio:** <https://soundcloud.com/globaldevinst/the-routledge-handbook-of-global-development-episode-3>

**Kearnin Sims** Hi, I'm Dr. Kearnin Sims, a lecturer in Development Studies at James Cook University. I'm here today as Lead Editor of the Routledge Handbook of Global Development, which was just published in February 2022. And I'm speaking to you from the lands of the Gimuy Walubara Yidinji and Yirrganudji people, in beautiful far north Queensland. This podcast is the final episode of a three part series discussing the handbook. And today I'm joined by two other members of the book's editorial team, Dr Albert Salamanca, who is a Senior Research Fellow at Stockholm Environment Institute's Bangkok Office, and Dr Pichamon Yeophantong, a Senior Lecturer in International Relations and Development at the University of New South Wales, Canberra. Thank you, Albert, and thank you Pichymon for joining me today.

**Albert Salamanca** Thanks to you too, Kearnin and congratulations for getting the handbook out. And good morning to my friend here Pichamon.

**Pichamon Yeophantong** Thank you very much, Kearnin. Thank you Albert as well. Great to be here.

**Kearnin Sims** Thank you both. Your section of the book is titled "Sustainability and Environment". It's a really fabulous section, and I wonder perhaps, if I could start with you Albert, can you tell us a little bit about what your section is all about?

**Albert Salamanca** Thanks, Kearnin. So the section that we, me and Pichamon, worked on, was on sustainability and development. So we really try to unpack if you like, in this section, critical debates and we also look at influential concepts in sustainability and development. To try to understand why, despite decades of "doing development" and so many permutations of different terms about our own sustainability and development, there isn't one of course we are towards the end of it, which is on sustainable development. We're still not getting the sustainability. So our intention really was to really try to shine new light, if you like, on these two concepts; on sustainability and development.

**Kearnin Sims** Yeah, fantastic. Thank you, Albert. Pichamon, would you like to add anything to that? Could you tell us perhaps what the chapters in the section add up to collectively?

**Pichamon Yeophantong** Sure. We intentionally asked a range of scholars and practitioners, who come from very different disciplinary and professional backgrounds, to pen different chapters for the section. And the idea there was for us to try and capture the range of challenges, the big debates, that define the nature of the field that we are in, which obviously is development. But of course, appreciating the importance of environmental sustainability in these discussions.

And so collectively speaking, altogether the chapters are very different. They speak about topics that are interrelated, but nonetheless touch on different sets of actors, different sets of problems. But nonetheless, altogether, they do really highlight the importance of environmental considerations when we think about human development. And it also raises the question that I think we really need to seriously consider, which is what does it mean for us to develop sustainably? And what does sustainable human development itself mean? And so in light of that, they really do again capture the range of issues that we are faced with today; in light of both the COVID-19 pandemic, but also clearly the very big problem of climate change.

**Kearrin Sims** Absolutely. Thank you, Pichamon. I mean, sustainable development has been the way that development should be practised since the very beginning. But as you mentioned in the context of climate change, it's also a challenge that becomes more and more significant with every passing day. Is there, I wonder, one or two chapters that you found particularly interesting? I'm sure you found them all interesting, but is there one or two that that stood out for any reason? Maybe Albert, is there any for you?

**Albert Salamanca** Yeah, I've got actually two. One of them was Ilan Kelman's planetary boundary concept. The reason I'm actually interested in this one because Ilan criticises, or critiques, the whole idea of planetary boundaries, especially its failure to address equity. And not only that, he also actually criticised sort of my organisation's stand on the whole idea of planetary boundaries. So it was an interesting read because it gave me a different point of view on how to look at the concept of planetary boundaries. So to me, that was really an interesting journey to be working with Ilan on this particular chapter and also being critiqued along the way.

[00:05:30] The second one is the chapter by La Vina and Reyes on the Anthropocene. The reason I like this concept is again, also taking what is sort of globally known, globally accepted and very topical, and sort of took a different twist by actually arguing that maybe we shouldn't call it 'Anthropocene', but we call it the 'capitalism', given the dominance of capital in development. And also by injecting a very global South perspective, because La Vina and Reyes are from the Philippines. They both work for NGOs. In fact, La Vina is a human rights lawyer. And so together, they provide a sort of a grounded perspective on these global topics, which are heavily being discussed, heavily being critiqued. But we haven't really sort of listened to other voices on the ground who have other perspectives on what this, what the Anthropocene is all about. So to me, Ilan Kelman's chapter and La Vina and Reyes' chapter are the two exciting ones for me.

**Kearrin Sims** Wonderful. Thank you, Albert. You've touched on there too, the immense diversity of authorship within your section, and that's something I want to come back to. It's something I really value from your section. But Pichamon, maybe I'll check in with you first. Was there any chapters that really spoke to you?

**Pichamon Yeophantong** It's a really difficult question to answer Kearrin because as I was reading through all of the chapters again, in preparation for this podcast, it occurred to me again that each

of the chapters have their respective strengths and it really does depend on what you would be wanting to use that chapter for. So of course, we have a very strong pedagogical focus in our, in this volume, and so really each of them, I think, are really nicely tailored to people who are teaching or lecturing about the different topics.

That being said, when I [was] reading through it again, I think, look, I like and enjoyed all of the chapters and working with the authors. At the same time, I think to me, I was intrigued by some of the ideas presented in the chapter on indigenous rights, new technology and the environment. In large part because it's a topic that we don't really talk too much about in the environmental sustainability and development space. And so it was really interesting to see how these authors brought these different themes together, and how important new technology is when it comes to indigenous rights and the role of indigenous communities in protecting the environment.

Similarly, the chapter on transnational environmental crime and development is also very interesting because these are two areas that we don't really hear in relation to each other very often. And so to think about the implications of transnational environmental crime, which has really been increasing in this region, especially with COVID-19, and what the implications are for development. Again, it's just really interesting, a very interesting combination. So yeah, those I think would be my two picks, but not because I don't find any of the other chapters really interesting and very insightful. They all really are and so to anyone who's listening to this, please do go out and read all of them.

**Kearrin Sims** Haha, fantastic. Thanks Pichamon. I want to follow it up with an equally challenging question for you, perhaps, which is to ask if there was anything that didn't make it into the section that you would really like to see in a follow up edition?

**Albert Salamanca** That's an interesting question to ask Kearrin, because the subject area is global development and I think you can only be restricted by the amount that can be published, at a given time and also a given space. But that said I think, and I'd like to tackle this one also later, maybe in the next discussion, but to me more voices from the global South. Because still, no matter how proactive we were in reaching out to different authors from different disciplines, whether they're practise oriented or in academia, a lot of the scholarship is still being dominated by authorities or scholars from the global North. And maybe, we also need to sort of maybe try to understand why that is the case and why, despite the amount of effort, we're still not able to get a lot of authors from the global South to be part of this conversation of the authorship of the global handbook. I think it's a challenge, and I think it's a worthwhile challenge to take, if we really wanted to understand why development is the way to this.

**Kearrin Sims** Yeah, wonderful, I think that's a really important point to make. Thank you Albert. Pichamon, were you going to add anything?

**Pichamon Yeophantong** No, I completely agree with Albert on that one. I think it's a never ending endeavour that we have to all be a part of in terms of ensuring greater representation from the global South or the majority world. And in light of that, I think we were able to try and ensure that diversity of thinking. Nonetheless, there were a couple of authors and chapters that we unfortunately weren't able to include, primarily because they weren't able. They didn't have the time to, they weren't able to contribute in time as a result of the whole COVID-19 pandemic.

One in particular that I felt was, would have been great to have as part of the line up of chapters in our section, was one on colonialism, development and the environment. Again, because it's a topic that we don't hear too much about, and of course people these days are especially in you know if we think about the African continent or Southeast Asia, there's been re-emerging debates on neo-colonialism and what that means for environmental sustainability and development, especially vis-a-vis the really big, the large scale development projects that we see popping up around the global South. So in light of that, it would have been great to have had that particular topic represented, I think, in our section, but it wasn't really possible for very understandable reasons. And so hopefully, if there were to be a follow up, that would be one that I would be really keen to have included.

**Albert Salamanca** And also, if I may add on that conversation, Kearnin. I think it helps also to be really intentional. Because I remember I had this conversation with Pichamon. We had a spreadsheet, and also because of the instruction that you had for us to list down sort of the topics the authors, according by gender, by countries. So for example, we had to restrict our selection of quotas from the Philippines because there were already two at that point. And then we had to make sure also that we see the other authors, or other sections, given that maybe putting them into our section will just change the balance. So being intentional in the design, I think really helped in the outcome that we've got. Because if we were not, if it were just directed by what's available, then our intention to come up with a handbook that sort of represents different voices, different abilities would be hampered.

**Kearnin Sims** Okay, fantastic. So I might pick up on this topic of representation because it was one of the overarching aims for the handbook. That the Global Development Handbook would have global authorship and to have a large number of authors contributing from the majority world. And your section in particular really excelled in that way. And what I wanted to ask you was; how your ability to achieve that aligns in any ways with, either with your own positionality, or with about how you approach your research, or perhaps the locations of your where your research is based. What were some of the factors that contributed, perhaps its values base, that contributed to you being so successful in reaching out to some lesser known, but really valuable, scholars, but also some well-known scholars who may not have otherwise been given the opportunity? How did you go about approaching your different authors?

**Albert Salamanca** Yeah, for me, I used personal connections and understanding of their work. And also understanding the value of their work and why they need to be heard globally. So I was really trying to be proactive and reach out. Of course, I can only be limited in my network and also the authors in the region that I've read and interacted with. So I tried to reach out to them and see whether they would be interested, and bring them in and convince them of the value of being part of this handbook. So there was really that desire, personal desire, to reach out. And again, because of that realisation that not all of them really have the same opportunities as you would be in if you would be a scholar in the global North. So...and I feel there was an opportunity there because there was really a desire in the handbook to be that proactive and that sort of democratic in the way we select our authors. So I sort of exploited that opportunity.

**Kearnin Sims** Great and Pichamon?

**Pichamon Yeophantong** Excluding the introduction that Albert and I wrote, we have altogether 13 chapters in our section. Originally, it was looking more like 20 I think at one point, Albert. Because we had reached out to so many people, and people who were genuinely enthusiastic about this

undertaking and being part of this handbook. Again, because of COVID-19, a number of authors weren't able to contribute in the end. Nonetheless, much like Albert, the way in which I reached out to the people that I really wanted to see represented in this handbook, were people part of my own professional networks. But they were also people who were being recommended by my colleagues. And so people who I didn't necessarily know, who nevertheless are emerging or leading scholars in their own right. And so I think that snowballing technique was very useful in this particular instance because it exposed me to new scholars whom I never encountered before, but who are nonetheless doing really exciting work in their respective field work sites.

At the same time, Albert and I, we've had many of these conversations as we were thinking about how to structure the section and everything. But aside from ensuring geographical diversity, and one thing that people I think will immediately note is the fact that there is a bit of a concentration on scholars who are located in Southeast Asia, or who work on Southeast Asia. And this is by virtue of the fact that both Albert and I, of course, have worked extensively in the region. We did reach out to scholars from other regions as well, from South America, from Africa. Again, they had pre-existing commitments or were so badly impacted by COVID-19 that they weren't able to contribute. So again, if there were to be a follow up volume, I think that would be what we would want to aim for.

But aside from the geographical diversity consideration, we were also very mindful of ensuring gender diversity as well, in the nature of the authors, with respect to the authors that we had reached out to but also there kind of, we wanted for there to be a mix between established well-known scholars, but also emerging well-known scholars. And to ensure that there generational diversity as well. Because of course, one of the key kind of important considerations when it comes to talking about climate change and environmental sustainability is the importance of intergenerational equity and to ensure that there is constant dialogue between all of the generations. So that is essentially what we had tried to accomplish in the section, and so it was very much aligned with our own values, I would dare to say for Albert as well here. And the the focus really on ensuring that people's lived experiences as scholars, but also as practitioners, shine through in the contributions.

**Kearrin Sims** Fantastic. Thank you, Pichamon. These are all quite common aspirations within the development studies and international development work nowadays, but I think you both did a really great job of turning those aspirations into something meaningful. So thank you again for doing that.

I didn't have any other further questions for you. I did want to take the opportunity again to thank you both for all the work that you did in bringing the handbook together and to recognise that, along with the rest of the editorial team, the handbook wouldn't have made it over the finish line if it wasn't for all your contributions and all the hard work that you did. So thank you very much again. It's been a pleasure to work together.

Is there anything else that you would like to add before we close? You might have a new book you want to plug. You might want to say hi to your mum. Anything you want to add?

**Pichamon Yeophantong** Hello, mum. And I quickly jumped in on that note. I think, and if I may speak on your behalf as well Albert here, I think we both just also wanted to really thank you, all of the contributors, who were able to contribute and those who weren't able to but were nonetheless enthusiastic and constantly responded to our emails. I mean, none of this would have

been possible without their work and their contributions. And it really was the case that we were all working under conditions that were less than ideal. I mean with COVID-19 and everything. So it was really amazing to see how committed people were to ensuring that the section, and the handbook more broadly, crossed that finish line. But also the quality of the contributions that the authors were able to produce is really amazing. And again, I can only really encourage anyone who's listening to this, whether you are a scholar, a practitioner or a student who's interested in environmental sustainability issues, please do check it out because the people who have contributed to this volume really know what they're talking about. But most importantly, they've written each of the chapters in a way that is accessible and ensures that you go away not only with a deeper theoretical and scholarly understanding of the debates and challenges at hand, but that you also have an understanding or insight into the policy and pedagogical implications as well.

**Albert Salamanca** Thanks, Pichamon. From my side Kearnin, I'd really like to thank you and the other editors for this opportunity. And of course, I have to thank my co-editor for this section, Pichamon, especially during the last leg of preparing, finalising the various chapters when I was not available because I was on leave and had a few things in the Philippines.

But one thing I want to highlight, and picking up on the points raised by Pichamon, is that the handbook is not just a collection of ideas, but it's also a collection of approaches on how to teach those ideas. So if readers are interested in finding out, if they would have a lecture or maybe have engagements around the topics discussed in the handbook, there's really opportunities there to go through some of the suggested readings, suggested approaches on how to teach them, so that we can sort of enliven the way we, the ideas, contained in the handbook. And if they work, maybe it's good to receive feedback that they work. If they don't work, then maybe it's good to receive feedback as well, so that the next iteration of the handbook could be improved in terms of its pedagogical contribution. Thank-you.

**Kearnin Sims** Fantastic. Thank you once again Dr. Albert Salamanca from the Stockholm Environmental Institute. And thank you once again, Dr Pichamon Yeophantong from the University of New South Wales. It's been a pleasure chatting with you today.

**Albert Salamanca** Thank you. Good day.

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