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# 8

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND GLOBAL JUSTICE

From hegemonic development  
to planetary well-being

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### Introduction

The planetary well-being approach emphasizes the need to protect vital natural processes in order to secure the well-being of both human and nonhuman nature. While the current hegemonic concept framing the balance between human needs and environmental protection is evidently “sustainable development”, planetary well-being departs from this idea, offering a more holistic approach and a stronger emphasis on nonhuman nature (hereafter nature) beyond its instrumental value.

But to tap the full potential of the planetary well-being concept, insights from other disciplines should be used to complement its core ideas. In this chapter, we lay out a perspective from critical development studies. Critical development studies assists us to understand the shortcomings of the sustainable development approach. It highlights how “development” as a practice and a mindset has shaped our understanding of societal problems and solutions, and how current ideas about development (and hence also sustainable development, despite the recent broadening of its agenda) stand in the way of progress towards the aims of planetary well-being. Critical development studies also provides ideas that are complementary to planetary well-being by emphasizing the need to recognize the diversity of knowledge systems and hence of relevant ways of relating to the natural environment, as well as the role of global economic patterns in creating and sustaining inequalities. These insights assist planetary well-being theory to understand the systems of power and inequality which current “development” subtly advocates and operates within, as the theory moves towards addressing the needs of human societies and the planet.

This chapter explicates and illustrates the critical development studies approach and how it can contribute to planetary well-being. We begin with a critical

assessment of the meaning of development, focusing on its role as an epistemic monoculture and hierarchical system. This is done by means of a literature review. Then we apply ideas from the reviewed literature to a case study on climate change and cash crop cultivation, to illustrate the differences between sustainable development and planetary well-being approaches. The chapter closes with a discussion and conclusions.

### **The problems of development as we know it**

As a concept, development appears to capture the human striving for progress, and it describes both a culture of modernity and an economic policy programme. Thanks to these associations, development easily becomes self-justificatory: As development is equated with progress, everything that falls under the label of development can claim to be positive. Moreover, it is the basis for policy interventions. When problems such as persistent poverty and environmental destruction are noted, development emerges as the suggested framework to design the remedies. For these reasons, it is particularly important to scrutinize the concept critically.

Development is traditionally understood as economic growth, and as instrumental in foregrounding the grand target of achieving “the end of poverty” (Sachs, 2005). It is associated with the Enlightenment tradition along with advances in science, transport, healthcare, and the like. But the culture underlying these advances also entails the perception of human beings as superior, “estranged” and “separated” from nature (Diaz Cruz, 2020), leading to attempts to dominate nature as human beings see themselves as the only measure of true value (Purser, Park and Montuori, 1995). Through the process, nature has come to be seen as primarily a resource stock (Abedi-Servastani and Shahvali, 2008), leading to a reckless exploitation of the environment.

Abilities to explain and control the natural world have also impacted upon the attitude of the “developed” towards other knowledge systems (Nygren, 1999). A myriad of cultures and related knowledges about local nature have been deemed “backwards”, inferior, or even incapable of reason. During the colonial era, subjects in the colonies faced discrimination as their supposed proximity to nature constituted an excuse for their domination. While less explicit and appearing in a more benevolent guise today, the notion of “the third world” (Escobar, 1995) and the perception of “underdevelopment” as an undignified condition (Esteva, 1992) continue to legitimize interventions among the “underdeveloped” for both the implementers and recipients of this intervention (Escobar, 1995).

Furthermore, justifying policy processes in terms of development has meant the enforcement of market relations and rights, as well as a shift of ownership patterns away from communal ownership (Bryant, 1998). Within cultures of modernity, the state and the market are often seen as mutually exclusive domains, and in practical terms development has meant precisely the enforcement of these two locations of power at the expense of the community.

Not only a process but also a criterion, development became the epistemological basis of how “good quality of life” was understood in terms of a command of goods with market value as well as specific kinds of relationships between states and individuals (Rist, 2007), rendering other relationships invisible. The resulting measures and approaches reflected the attempt to universalize the lifestyles of the global North. Later, these ideas about quality of life were rationalized into technical indicators (Bhuta, Malito and Umbach, 2018), the most prominent being of course the Gross Domestic Product. As the standards and benchmarks used to measure “high quality of life” directly reflect Northern lifestyles, in effect maximizing consumption, they are in direct conflict with many other value systems. Anecdotally, for example, many Andean populations critique Western notions of development as increased material production and consumption (Carbonnier *et al.*, 2017). Rather, there exists the multi-level world theories which influence and enrich the overarching concept of “*buen vivir*” or “good living” which generally depicts development not as an end or achievement of the state but as an ongoing process of enhancing nature-community living (*ibid.*).

In addition to organising and assessing states’ performance, development can be also seen as the name and justification for the existing global political order. In this sense it shapes and upholds existing global relations, such as the lock-in of the colonized countries’ role as producers of a single unrefined crop. While development is justified as a discourse based on the notion of poorer countries “catching up” economically with wealthier ones, the global economic system has pushed economic disparities to an unprecedented level. Market relations, which are at the heart of cultures of development, mean that distributive logics do not follow human needs but market demands, which is strictly contrary to the idea of planetary well-being. Economic disparities are also intertwined with disparities in political power and epistemological dominance.

Recently, there has been a further expansion of economic relations. The development of the modern market society has meant a globalization of resources and externalities, with negative externalities allocated to already disadvantaged social categories and regions (Hornborg, 2009). The cultural ideas underlying modernity and capitalism, according to which nature can be treated as “resources” or “raw material”, have been combined with the globalization of those ideas and the markets for those resources. This has led to new and destructive patterns of relating to nature. Such processes have also paved way for phenomena such as land-grabbing and capture (Abernethy *et al.*, 2017), and the privatization of state property around the global South.

### **Alternative pathways: Development as usual or something else?**

To sum up, despite the progress associated with development, seeing the world as essentially comprising nations at different “development levels” implicitly justifies the downplaying of global hierarchies and a culture that is destructive to the natural

environment. Development is both a process and a set of interventions, and to an increasing extent also a governance system. It both solves problems (as interventions and governance) and creates them (as a process), while justifying itself as completely apolitical and technical (Ferguson, 1994). Poverty alleviation is a key goal of development, but development as a process also creates new forms of poverty (Rist, 2007). Environmental protection is at the centre of current development governance, but environmental damage is also a product of the process of development (e.g., Norberg-Hodge, 2009).

From this, there follows a choice between two alternatives: Either the approaches associated with development can be trusted to solve existing problems—if only enough funds are provided, and enough efforts made—or alternatives can be sought. Many will be happy to opt for the first alternative. This is not least because development appears to become an ever-more multifaceted and evolving idea as “non-conventional” development theories form an intellectual current (Peet and Hartwick, 2009) and new definitions of development emerge. Such new approaches have shifted the focus of development to freedoms (Sen, 2000), or have simply aimed to massively broaden the agenda, as is visible in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Yet sustainable development (Brundtland, 1987), both as a scientific idea and as a policy programme, also accepts the traditional starting points of development, despite its openness to new definitions and even struggles over definition (Eskelinen, 2021). This means that it confuses a dignified life with a uniform social model, and it accepts the idea of nature as a resource stock. Therefore, sustainable development continues to enforce anthropocentric ideas amid possible ways to formulate human–nature relations (see Chapter 7). It asks how this uniform social model can be maintained, and how the resource stock can be managed responsibly. The primary focus is on “efficiency” by reducing waste and extracting the maximum from non-renewable resources (Eckersley, 1992; for a recent approach, see J. Sachs, 2015), as well as managing various other externalities generated by the contemporary economy. In this process, environmental concerns become assimilated into the rhetoric, dynamics, and power structures of development (W. Sachs, 2015). It has been argued that behind the “noble” intentions of even updated ideas about development lies a design which marginalizes discontent while allowing hierarchies, profit maximization, and “business as usual” (Abernethy *et al.*, 2017; Bryant, 1998).

Practically, an alternative approach would mean noting the variety of epistemologies and undoing hierarchical relations. The first task for research is then to locate and understand the diversity of ways of describing, perceiving, and relating to nature. Some currently marginalized worldviews could inform a healthier relationship with the environment (Dizerega, 1996). But this call for diversity should not be understood only in terms of undoing the destruction of traditional societies (Diaz Cruz, 2020). Indeed, the concept of “grassroots postmodernism”, referring to both a diversity of worldviews and a rejection of hierarchies associated with development, has been suggested as an alternative (Esteva and Prakash, 2014). For

another possible path, the various conceptualizations of environmental relations offered by the environmental movements of the global South (Martinez-Alier *et al.*, 2014) offer a rich body of grassroots perspectives.

The importance, relevance, and validity of local knowledge have gained increasing recognition and attention (Naess, 2013; Nygren, 1999). Barkin (2010) explains that scientists have come to acknowledge the potential of expanding horizons and looking for insights from premodern sources of knowledge. Martin *et al.* (2016) highlight the importance of recognizing local populations' cultures and identities in environmental conservation. Hinz *et al.* (2020) explain that Indigenous communities in particular often possess knowledge about their immediate environment, accumulated over centuries. These communities have also shown resilience in overcoming adverse situations. They offer "alternative solutions to our contemporary environmental challenges" (Tosam, 2020, p. 283) and can help to identify points of tension and contestation within the dominant knowledge system. When a problem is not framed according to dominant knowledge or perspectives, there is room for new viewpoints and innovative solutions.

It is important not to romanticize local knowledge, or to assume that it is static and inherently conservative. Local knowledge systems do not inherently hold more value, and they may be subject to internal struggles over legitimate representations, just like any other knowledge system. But there should be a balanced view of different knowledge systems, which will allow environmental issues to be assessed from multiple angles. Furthermore, while local knowledge systems cannot be assumed to contain nature-centric approaches, exposure to alternative knowledge systems is nonetheless paramount if we are to break down dominant views of how the world works and ought to work. Exclusively operating within the domain of dominant knowledge systems makes it difficult to envision radically alternative futures, and thus an exploration of local knowledge systems—which may greatly differ from the dominant worldviews—may help us to navigate a critical engagement with planetary well-being. In addition, understanding how development spreads, supports, and maintains a certain form of knowledge dominance can help us to understand where knowledge appropriate for planetary well-being needs to intervene. This is why critical development studies calls for an understanding of various knowledge systems.

Also, it is important to uncover hidden ecological imbalances. The fairness and unfairness of global trade is typically expressed and assessed in monetary terms, downplaying other forms of injustice. Global trade involves ecological inequalities whereby the global South depletes its natural resources and uses its natural world as a dumping ground to satisfy and maintain the lifestyles of the global North (Parks and Roberts, 2010; Rice, 2007). While on the surface the countries of the global North have been successful in reducing their carbon emissions and improving their environmental policies, they continue to be heavily reliant on the extractive economies of the global South (Jorgenson, 2006, 2016; Rice, 2007). In effect, the "wealthy nations offshore the energy-, natural resource- and pollution-intensive

stages of production” (Rice, 2007, p. 139). One concept that can take note of hierarchies, for instance, is “climate debt”, which refers to the disproportionate level of carbon emissions and flow of resources between the global North and the global South (Parks and Roberts, 2010).

So, while the idea of development suggests that we take states as fundamental units and analyze their development levels, it must be acknowledged that economic hierarchies are first and foremost global, and that they relate not only to resources but also to uneven possibilities to define and affect one’s environment. For instance, the conservation paradigm informed by sustainable development has sometimes led to cases where local communities are no longer able to utilize their environments in traditional ways: As governing bodies restrict access to natural resources (Wisner, 2010), communities are unable to define their relationship to nature in appropriate terms.

Furthermore, an alternative approach to environmental protection also means asking questions about what is produced in the first place and who decides about this. Some discussions have pointed out that there is a need to differentiate between luxuries and necessities (cooking, heating, lighting), including in the context of carbon emissions and other environmental damage (Liverman, 2009). Currently, a minority of individuals are driving the extravagant demand for natural resources, with the rest merely functioning to meet that demand. Thus, it is not accurate to blame the entire human species equally for social and environmental destruction. Also, as Rätzl and Uzzell (2009) highlight, it is important to ask questions about who decides what goods are produced and how. Who decides on the accepted social and ecological costs of production? What social categories are involved in this decision-making process? The challenge is not only to point out existing disparities, but also to question the value system that makes the possession of luxuries seem desirable—in other words, to question our understanding of high-quality lifestyles and the unsustainability they promote (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014). As noted above, quality of life is currently seen mostly in terms of consumption; alternative criteria are needed here. Moreover, even if needs are separated from mere desires, there are still good questions about how needs can be satisfied with less damage to earth systems (see Kortetmäki *et al.* 2021).

Development as a mode of thought and set of hierarchies is typically not an issue in the ongoing struggles between cultural spheres. Rather, many of the worldviews described above have been largely internalized in the cultures of the global South. This applies especially at the state level, as many Southern countries articulate their goals in terms of economic growth and other ideas originating in development thought. A diversity of epistemologies and relationships to nature exist at the grassroots level and often out of sight, even with difficulties to be articulated; therefore, active anthropological learning is necessary. Critical development studies is an attempt to uncover existing diverse relationships to nature and conceptions of well-being that are currently overlooked. Furthermore, it aims to reveal the patterns of power that impact on the extent to which people have autonomy to alter their environment.



### Case example: Organic cocoa farmers in Ghana

Having established the need to recognize patterns of cultural, economic, and political domination as aspects of development, we now go on to present an illustrative case study to highlight how the devaluation of local environmental knowledge is intertwined with global economic inequality. This case study looks at organic cocoa farmers in Ghana and their perceptions of climate change. It is a somewhat typical case for development studies, as it is based in sub-Saharan Africa, is relevant to global economic patterns, and aims for a particular sensitivity to local perceptions. This exemplary case study leans on both a literature review and thematic interviews ( $n = 10$ ) carried out by one of the authors of this chapter, using a qualitative purposive sampling approach.

Cocoa-farming, seen in context, is a typical postcolonial activity in the sense that cocoa is a cash crop for export. Its patterns of production are constructed around the continuity of the colonial division of labour, which employed crop monocultures to serve the imperial economy. For Ghana, cocoa production continues to contribute an estimated 25% of the gross domestic product. The West Africa region accounts for almost 70% of the global production of cocoa. This implies that West Africa generally, Ghana, and a very large number of smallholder farmers are highly dependent on cocoa cultivation. The Ghanaian government has internalized development-framed growth objectives, but it operates within the constraints of the global economy, which make both the increased refinement of raw materials and the diversification of the economy difficult. The government has therefore made efforts to further increase the production of raw cocoa through various farming interventions, such as the supply of fertilizers and the deployment of pollinators to cocoa plantations (COCOBOD, 2021).

These efforts come in the context of climate change, which is causing extreme high temperatures and unpredictable rain patterns that have a massive impact on farming (Derkyi *et al.*, 2018). Economic vulnerability is related to and exacerbated by environmental change and existing inequalities. Cocoa thrives in temperate forest zones, and so climate change affects its sustainable production. Many studies have pointed to the impact of climate change on cocoa production in West Africa, as well as to farmers' awareness and perceptions of the issue (Ameyaw *et al.*, 2018; Hutchins *et al.*, 2015; Ofori-Boateng and Insah, 2014).

Cocoa cultivation is naturally an economic issue. Applying the sustainable development approach would mean asking how production can be maximized given existing environmental constraints and the need to consider the continuity of production. While the SDGs entail a broader perspective, with numerous sub-targets related to environmental protection, this core approach remains. Yet, other vocabularies exist with which to understand these circumstances. The questions emerging from critical development studies that have relevance to planetary well-being are as follows: How do the short-term responses to production challenges such as fertilizer provision influence large-scale processes that are fundamental to



human and nonhuman well-being? How is well-being in this case conditioned by global economic structures? What do farmers' perceptions of the change in the natural environment tell us about locally relevant human–nature relationships? And how are these questions related?

Farmers in the region indeed point out an increase in temperatures and occurrences of drought (Ameyaw *et al.*, 2018), changes in rainfall patterns, which cause a high incidence of black pod disease, resulting in low yields (Anim-Kwapong and Frimpong, 2008), and negative effects on soil health and fertility, along with low production (Hutchins *et al.*, 2015). The farmers interviewed for our case study also referred to such experiences, in addition to experiences of poverty and hunger due to the effects of climate change on their livelihoods and environment. Generally, the farmers saw the well-being of natural systems as closely interlinked with their own living conditions, in a sense not restricted to the economy. If bodies of water ran dry, this meant long walks in search of water, which in turn decreased the time available for community development. Changes in the natural environment included the disappearance of living organisms such as plants and mushrooms, less water for animals, and diminishing soil nutrients.

How can people react to such changes in nature and thereby in their lifestyles, even their survival? One possibility is to try to adapt. Much of the sustainable development discourse points in this direction, and “resilience”—referring to the capacities of communities to live through external shocks—has become a fashionable concept. But from the perspective of individual farmers occupying a marginalized position in the global economic system, possibilities for adaptation are limited. They could shift to other economic ventures, an idea expressed by many farmers. Alternative livelihoods include oil palm plantation work, maize and cassava farming, and off-farm activities such as trading or artisanal work such as bricklaying and masonry (Anim-Kwapong and Frimpong, 2008). Even if cocoa cultivation continues, continuity at the level of individual farmers might be very unpredictable. It has been estimated that even though adaptation measures might allow Ghana's current cocoa production level to be sustained until the 2050s, farmland in some areas of the country may become unsuitable (Bunn, Schreyer and Castro, 2018). Some analyses predict a decline in the general production level (Ofori-Boateng and Insah, 2014).

However, the opportunities and constraints with regard to acting and adapting are somewhat unique in the case of organic farmers. Organic farming and labelling is clearly one way to respond to the environmental crisis, a means available to smallholder farmers, and very much in line with the global system of sustainable development governance and market relations. The interviewed farmers expressed a determination to mitigate climate change instead of seeking other subsistence strategies. They mentioned that in order to prevent water scarcity on their farmland and in their community, they were planting trees and vegetative cover to protect bodies of water from drying up. The planting of cover at the local level positively reflects the knowledge that afforestation is one possible way to combat climate

change, as it seeks to prevent the intensification of desertification. The farmers also reported that to mitigate climate change and alleviate its local impacts, they had been carrying out many other activities to protect bodies of water on their farmland and in their community, such as protecting the trees on the riverbanks.

But adopting organic agriculture is not only a measure to mitigate climate change; it is also a global standard. As such, it reflects current global governance approaches as well as consumer demand, even if state policies vary. For example, organic cocoa farmers are mandated to practise mixed cropping, and they therefore also need water for other plants such as vegetables. The farmers say they are committed to these practices, despite the hardships involved—for example, not using agrochemicals to control pests and diseases, or bush-burning to control weeds, because of their impacts on biodiversity. But one might ask what epistemological and functional room for manoeuvre are appropriate, who should have the power to oversee production standards, and what are the implications of the postcolonial division of labour on which the production pattern rests. These questions posed by the planetary well-being approach are necessary ones, revealing the limitations of focusing exclusively on optimally large volumes of produce.

Although they had very limited influence, most of the farmers in our data had switched from conventional farming to organic farming as a contribution to combating climate change. Several of the interviewed farmers also interpreted the drivers of climate change through the lens of local changes in nature use—for example, referring to the cutting down of nearby rainforests, the destruction of bodies of water, and observed changes in land use. Despite the global nature of the problems, interpretations of changes in the natural environment are strongly locally mediated. But local sense-making can also mean assuming large responsibilities, despite one's marginal contribution to the environmental problem in question. As people seem to do whatever lies within their power, this responsibility-shifting may have more visible implications in the future. For example, since humanity may soon be approaching the boundaries of global freshwater use (Rockström *et al.*, 2009), questions emerge about exactly whose water use should adapt in response.

All in all, analyzing the intertwining of global power relations and local sense-making as suggested by the planetary well-being approach, helps us to understand the broader problem of sustainable development. Slogans such as “combining people, the planet and profit” (Washington, 2015) say little about the actual possibilities available to farmers, how their interpretations are valued, or how they might undo inequalities. Neither do ideas such as the need to meet human basic needs say much about what would constitute an appropriate action—or even level of action—in these circumstances. It has been suggested that the power an individual or social category is able to exert can be identified through their ability to alter their environment (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014). A number of scholars (Barkin, 2010; Holden and Linnerud, 2010; Räthzel and Uzzell, 2009) have indeed highlighted that a lack of power or influence over one's environment will hinder one's ability and willingness to change one's behaviour. Moreover, research needs to look at the

well-being of specific natural ecosystems in order to understand the conditions of human well-being in specific locations.

The sustainable development approach would mean adapting to existing conditions as far as possible, securing responsible action within the domains under each institution's or individual's control, but accepting the constraints of export orientation, consumer power, and existing systems of trade governance. Farmers could practise mixed cropping, shift to other regions if necessary, and participate in certification schemes that would increase the value of their produce in the eyes of powerful global consumers. Possibly, farmers could also gain access to best practices from other regions. What is omitted in this discourse is questions related to the global division of labour, the allocation of vulnerabilities, local epistemologies, and the room for manoeuvre available to different societal positions. It is also unclear what sustainable development posits as the goal of cocoa farmers. Is there any "catch-up", or just the perennially unequal global organization? Is there increased refinement, new and diverse production methods, or improved food security with more diverse produce? Most importantly, is there any recognized relationship with one's natural environment other than an instrumental one? Planetary well-being, on the other hand, suggests a holistic approach. It respects limits in terms of both planetary boundaries and the protection of local ecosystems, but it also posits the empowerment of producers so that a needs-driven approach will replace existing power structures. If we are trying to understand the conditions of well-being, it is necessary to learn about local perceptions, and to ask questions about the well-being of nature from a non-anthropocentric perspective.

It needs to be noted too that local perceptions matter, beyond confirming what science already tells us. Local environmental knowledge has an important role to play in altering environmentally destructive behaviour, but it might have a limited impact if individuals feel powerless to change the wider system. Farmers construct their relationship with nature based on both the general conditions of cultivation (largely impacted by climate change) and their own approach to farming (for example, opting for organic farming). But it is the broader system of markets that determines what is produced, and most drivers of environmental change are beyond the control of local farmers.

## Discussion

Above, we have critically presented the concept and practice of development and the fundamental tension it involves, illustrating our points with a case study. On one hand, development is an effort towards progress: To utilize existing knowledge for the benefit of the whole of humanity. Its achievements need to be noted. Hence, development goals tend to be ambitious and expressed in very ethical rhetoric (Eskelinen, 2018). But development (as both a process and an intervention) can and should also be seen critically as (1) a project to undo locally relevant forms of knowing and relating to the immediate environment, in favour of an epistemological

monoculture and an approach that sees nature in terms of resources to be utilized on the global market; (2) a process of universalizing market relations; (3) the making of a set of global hierarchies; (4) the setting of criteria for quality of life that are informed by these relationships and hierarchies. Understanding development entails understanding it both as progress and as a manifestation of all these aspects.

So, what can critical development studies bring to planetary well-being? We need to note that theoretical ideas always carry old patterns of thought, and if not critically scrutinized these old ideas may unintentionally inform the new ideas too. Planetary well-being theory thus risks taking on dominant ideas about development if their roots and impact are not properly recognized. Critical development studies provides tools to analyze these dominant ideas. Not only can development studies help us to find new ways of understanding the root problems of this crisis and to engage with alternative visions, but it can also help to expand discussions of planetary well-being by framing the domain of the issue and where solutions may exist. It sheds light on the power relations that currently exist and need to be unmade if holistic well-being is to be pursued.

While development as a practice and idea is not homogenous, its core ideas persist in subtly justifying a culture that portrays nature as a resource stock and is based on seeing various people and cultures as inferior precisely because of their supposed proximity to nature. Even though ideas evolve, this core of development thinking remains strong. These ideas need to be understood, especially in terms of how they form obstacles to more holistic ideas of well-being and how they creep into ostensibly progressive approaches such as sustainable development. While it needs to be noted that the distinction between business as usual and alternatives is not always clear-cut—for example, resourcist approaches can be incorporated into very critical accounts, such as discussions of ecological boundaries—it is important to understand how development as an idea and practice works. Crucially, even alternative approaches to development reconceptualize the dynamics of human society, rather than human–nature relationships.

But there evidently remain human societies that are unable to even meet basic needs, and therefore there is a genuine need to ensure that all human beings can enjoy a dignified life. This entails an economic aspect: Farmers keep farming to achieve necessary material goods too. While the existence of poverty continues to be the justification for development, it is crucial to rearticulate the need to meet existing wants in accordance with planetary well-being values. Planetary well-being is not about romanticizing poverty, but about showing the connections between the well-being of humans and nonhuman nature—and we can add that it is necessary to see the diversity of possible vocabularies of the good life and progress.

Human beings always contemplate their relationships with nature, use various vocabularies, and attach different meanings to nature. It needs to be asked what kind of knowledge is privileged and recognized as relevant in the fight against environmental destruction (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014). Environmental protection

involves more than state-level environmental policies to meet today's needs without compromising those of the future (Brundtland, 1987), or "resource efficiency": It is a call for human beings to reconsider their relationship with the environment, and various sources of ideas and inspiration are needed for this. Our case study showed that farmers are constantly contemplating changes in nature based on their experience, and seeking solutions with available methods. Yet their room for manoeuvre is curtailed by uneven relations in the global economy, epistemology, environmental damage, and risk allocation. Farmers have some room for manoeuvre, some space for their experiences and interpretations to be heard, and some share of responsibility for mitigating climate change, but this space is limited by economic and epistemological inequalities.

Well-being should be seen not only as a matter of meeting certain baselines, but as a quality and virtue of society, extending from local communities to global society. Seen in this way, the issue is not to overcome poverty, but to overcome material inequalities and epistemological hierarchies. It is necessary to see the various facets of inequality: Wealth, political power, and cultural dominance. Crucially, inequalities are not arbitrary or caused by variations in individual achievements; rather, they are outcomes of long historical processes and economic and cultural structures. In the context of environmental protection, it should be noted that the level of responsibility for environmental damage varies significantly between individuals, groups of people, and nations. The planetary well-being approach helps us to unfold these various and overlapping aspects and understand how they intertwine, rather than managing policy within the system as it exists. The approach emphasizes that the depletion of natural processes also disables human well-being: Critical development studies complements this notion by emphasizing that the means of well-being are dependent on context. Not all means of well-being can be reduced to resources, and hence not even to resource efficiency. Other perceptions of human–nature relationships may be more relevant for promoting general planetary well-being.

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