Legitimacy and Transformative Power in Development Planning

Learning from the Sri Lankan values and power relations shaping governance and human outcome

by Daan Kazzaz

October 2009
# Table of Content

Introduction.................................................................................................................................................. 3  
Conceptualizing Context.................................................................................................................................. 3  
Cross cultural evolution of policy frameworks............................................................................................. 4  
Problem statement.......................................................................................................................................... 6  
Research Questions......................................................................................................................................... 7  
Statement - Cross-contextual transfer of knowledge: Learning ................................................................. 10  

**Section I – Theoretical Framework** ................................................................................................................. 12  
Introduction..................................................................................................................................................... 12  

Chapter 1 - Legitimacy in development ........................................................................................................ 13  
Introduction..................................................................................................................................................... 13  
Understanding conceptual change................................................................................................................. 13  
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................................... 15  

Chapter 2 – A relational perspective ........................................................................................................... 17  
Introduction..................................................................................................................................................... 17  
Complexity, dynamics and legitimacy ............................................................................................................ 17  
Power .............................................................................................................................................................. 19  
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................................... 20  

**Section II – Empirical reflections** ................................................................................................................ 22  
Introduction..................................................................................................................................................... 22  

Chapter 3 – Narrative Analysis ..................................................................................................................... 23  
Introduction..................................................................................................................................................... 23  
Contextual background – ethnic conflict ....................................................................................................... 23  
Contextual background - tsunami .................................................................................................................. 23  
Narrative analysis or Storytelling .................................................................................................................... 24  
Conducting Case study research in Sri Lanka ................................................................................................. 25  
Constraints and Opportunities ....................................................................................................................... 25
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 4 – Case Sri Lanka .................................................................</th>
<th>27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction...........................................................................</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Structure....................................................</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance culture..............................................................</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System of Government............................................................</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power transfer – Public - Public ........................................</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power transfer - Public-Private ..........................................</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion ..............................................................................</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration – Relational complexity and human outcome ........</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix..................................................................................</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex.....................................................................................</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**List of Figures and Annexes**

- figure 1 – interpreting context.......................................................... 5
- figure 2 – dynamic conception of collective interest................................. 8
- figure 3 – knowledge and identity arranged into a system of meaning........ 11
- figure 4 – human – world relationship: Meaningful Transformation............. 14
- figure 5 – ‘sense making’ to induce transformation..................................... 15
- figure 6 – meaningful change, preceded by a socially produced ‘challenging’ direction for action...... 16
- figure 7 – conception and perception; relational embedded in context........ 17
- figure 8 – Life in movement, as conceived in chapter one............................ 18
- figure 9 – Administrative Structure Sri Lanka.......................................... 27
- figure 10 – Elected Government Structure Sri Lanka.................................. 29

Annex 1 – Operability of the Sri Lankan Government system.......................... 36
Introduction
The initiative for this study was set up in the aftermath of the December 2004 Tsunami in the South Asian coast. A series of massive waves, generated by and earthquake off the coast of Sumatra (Indonesia), contributed to the death of more than 187,000 people and the disappearance of another 42,000 in more than nine countries. In Sri Lanka, an Island situated in the Indian Ocean, the disaster devastated a vast social and physical network of settlements and resulted in the internal displacement of almost half a million people. More than 35,000 were killed and almost 22,000 were seriously injured (Tsunami Evaluation Coalition., 2006).

Handling within the thematic framework of the design laboratory “New Concepts for the Dwelling” of the Architectural Design department of the Delft University of Technology (DUT), this research project was initially set out to explore shelter and housing resettlement within the socio-economic and cultural setting. From the western imperative on architectural design (Hatuka, 2005, Dorian, 2005) embedded in a morally based discourse that endorses sustainability, the initial question was how to design a post-tsunami (re)settlement project and how the local asset-base could be potentially utilized to induce the overall recovery of the region, which is the war-torn and tsunami affected Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. That is, the initial objective has been to conceive a contextual bounded design based (re)settlement solution which tends to evolve from the designers conception of ‘how to grasp opportunities and overcome needs and constraints’. This process seems to be bound up with the conceptualization of perceived context with the intention to transform it.

Conceptualizing Context
Research has been carried out along two lines which are strongly intertwined, a theoretical one and an empirical one. Building on both, a gradual shift in research perspective evolved from a focus on objectivity, which – as I will explain in this study – has a tendency to be detached from the contextual bound and dynamic social environment which is conceptualized, towards exploration and analysis of the cross-cultural and relational complex (Healey, 2006) social processes that constitute and guide the development of the conceived environment. That is, rather than attempting to isolate all the various factors of context (a focus on objectivity), this research acknowledges the socially produced and therefore value-laden nature of conceptions.

The evolving question in this has been how disaster response, recovery efforts and more general; ‘how interventions in social systems guide and shape a course of development’. How complete is design research in responding to context? How can context be conceived, what dimensions and levels of context should be measured, how does context change and what does it mean that the same context can result in differing individual experiences? What aspects of context will be foregrounded and which aspects dissolve to the background? That is, since choice situations tend to be a selection which is accompanied by a non-selection, how do we know what to focus on and when the most important (or least important) aspects of context are the subject of consideration?

In the former perspective (a focus on objectivity), an impression seems to be created that design and intervention – by making them central and exclusive to the research process – are fully complete in responding to context. Therefore, it might be expected that the concepts which shape a course of development can be constructed by those disciplines and organizations who are in a position to ‘objectify context’. From this holistic perspective, design and intervention tend to be responsive to
the contextual elements of the environment, as conceived by those who have the power to prescribe. By adopting this relational structure which brings forth our world and guides our actions and pose it as neutral objectivity, designers and planners seem to be mostly involved with a redistribution of resources guided by normative conceptions within a pre-determined policy framework. If this perspective is followed, it would mean that the designers conception is a legitimate normative guide for transformative development.

In the latter perspective (acknowledging the subjective and biased nature of conceptions), these normative concepts would be based on processes which take place socially between groups. It is through these processes that the normative guides which shape a course of development is negotiated and evolves. That is, the emphasis lies on cross-cultural negotiation to generate a collective norm or policy framework for transformation, rather than a prescription or adoption of a unitary and neutral norm of truth. However, it is to such negotiation that many groups do not have access, thus relegating them to positions of exclusion and marginalization, which in the case of urban development can assume also a physical character. (Corubolo, 1998) Therefore, in this study the evolution of normative conceptions shaping a course of development is conceived as a dynamic process based on negotiation which is defined by the voices that have been offered space for expression in strategy formation and development. (Healey, 2006)

Due to this recognition, the scope of this research is not to follow an imperative or prescriptive stance by seeking design based solutions for externally defined, ‘objectified’ or neutral problems. Following this perspective seems to be imply a focus on distributional aspects such as projects and physical objects or the build environment, seeking design based solutions for externally defined problems. Instead, the objective has become to question if and how the planning practice can point to ways of transforming power while searching for a normative conception as a guide to the course of development. In this, the term ‘transforming power’ refers to the ability of endogenous actors to influence the existing normative- or policy framework which shapes a course of development. In concrete, ‘transforming power’ tends to be involved with the assets to engage in intelligent and shared decision making, which means to enable endogenous actors to understand and influence the conditions and guiding principles in which development takes place.

In this perspective, planning is conceived as a value-laden interventional activity – as I will explain, the planner himself tends to be a biased actor within the decision-making process – within which contextual bound cross-cultural negotiation, and transformative action takes place. This structuring process shapes societies political, economic and environmental configurations (Harvey, 2000), which implies a focus on socio-spatial processes and the politics of planning practice. Therefore, a key issue in this research has become the evolution of normative frameworks which guide the selection and interpretation of context, as being a dynamic evolving conception of collective interest rather than the imposed interest of individual agents.

Cross cultural evolution of policy frameworks
Making the shift from a focus on objectivity, towards the dynamics and complexity of socially produced conceptions, involves an increasing trade-off between on the one hand experimental control within a scientific normative framework or culture, contextually embedded in the research department, and on the other hand the dynamics of the project environment – in this case the
Eastern province of Sri Lanka – which has been conceived. In other words, the research focus involves the product of continual cultural interaction between the scientific context available to those thinking about the scope of design based interventions, and the agenda of contextual bound and socially embedded problems and opportunities which are attempted to address. Those within the former group can be defined as the “external analyst” as being an outsider looking in, while latter can be seen as an actor in a situation, or the “internal participant”. (Healey, 2006)

Without acknowledging an exclusive differentiation between groups, for analytical purposes in this research I define the view of the former as an exogenous perception, while the latter will be defined as an endogenous perception which is equivalent to a view from within. This differentiation is conceived for illustrative purposes, though this study acknowledges that both groups are in continuous formative encounter through which both evolve. Therefore, a simple dualism such as the external actor versus the internal participant, is replaced by an emphasis on the evolving co-constitution and emergence of social relations and inclusive values.

Figure 1 displays how the evolution of a multi-contextual bound interpretation of context can be based on the continual inter-action between a contextual bound and value-laden Exogenous Perception on the one hand, and a value-laden contextual bound Endogenous Perception. Their formative encounter can lead to a transformative conception based on mutual values, as normative guide for development.

What I will be searching for is how to conceive the dynamics of this multi-cultural bound interpretation of context, based on the inter-action between a multiplicity of involved actors, and if this product can lead to a transformative normative conception based on collective interest.
Problem statement
The December 2004 tsunami in the South Asian coast inspired one of the largest international emergency relief and recovery operations ever undertaken (Tsunami Evaluation Coalition., 2006). It led to the most rapid and spontaneous outpouring of aid on record, stimulated in part, by Western media reports of ‘white suffering’ in coastal resorts and game parks (Muggah, 2008). As a result, the global and local humanitarian response was one of the main driving forces for the financing and the implementation of the post tsunami recovery programs. This massive infusion of aid pledged by the international community eventually exceeded the requested appeal by the Sri Lankan government.

During the aftermath of the disaster, the challenge has been to induce a multiplicity of value-driven actors to act in a manner that would reconcile their contextual-bound organizational goals with the Sri Lankan public goals relating to the human outcome. That is, the essentially humanitarian character of the program required a normative framework for allocating the enormous inflow of resources and managing the processes of relief, recovery and human development. However, determining a normative conception based on public interest seemed particular complex in Sri Lanka, a country which suffered more than two decades of violent conflict, costing over 70,000 lives and causing the internal displacement of up to 900,000 people. (Tsunami Evaluation Coalition., 2006)

Sri Lanka’s conflict, a legacy of mutual mistrust between the predominantly Sinhalese (the ethnic majority) government and the separatist movement of the minority Tamils, and the multiplicity of value driven humanitarian actors were decisive in shaping the parameters of a normative framework based on ‘public interest’. In the precarious social fabric of Sri Lanka – characterized by sub-nationalist extremism from below, and philanthropically driven institutions and individuals, global market driven forces and a public sector which is perceived as biased in the interest of one ethnic majority group from above (Japan Bank for International Cooperation., 2003, Muggah, 2008) – it seems legitimate to question the validity of a conceptualized public interest as a normative concept for shaping action. That is, it seems logical to question the legitimacy and meaning of the guiding principle as being a conception of an enormous multiplicity of values. And how about the accountability in the co-evolving fragmented governance landscape or the ‘rules of the game’ which tend to be blurred by all these spontaneously evolving new organisational forms of governance? Who is responsible, whose values can and will be conceptualized as a direction for action, and whose interest is served? That is, “if development means good change, questions arise about what is good, and what sorts of change matter. Answers can be personally defined and redefined. The changing meanings and concepts of development discourse both reflect and influence what is done. The realities of the powerful tend to dominate.” (Chambers, 2005) So, if action is shaped by socially produced norms, whose values bring forth our world and guide our actions?
Problem Statement

- Whose interest is served by adopting or prescribing a conceived ‘collective interest’ as guiding principle for shaping action?
- How can we envision a way of planning interventions in social systems that is guided by a normative principle based on collective interest?

Research Questions
By acknowledging a multiplicity of values and ways of perceiving contextual bound particularities, it seems logical to question on whose moral or interpretations any conceptualized norm for shaping action should be based. On which grounds is the legitimacy of values for conceptualization based, is it wider than the purposes of individual agents or does it serve the public purposes? Does this normative conceptualization carry significant meaning to shape a course of development? Does it have sufficient legitimacy to be interpreted and prescribed as a representing public interest or guiding principle for designing and steering a direction for action? (Healey, 2006) That is, is ‘our view’ better than ‘their view’? To answer this question it seems necessary to define what these conceptualized norms are, how they evolve, how they are produced while simultaneously being consumed, and how they are embedded into and intersect with existing socio-economic and environmental configurations or routines of practice. That is, how does the evolution of societal norms and the conceptualized policy frameworks for shaping action takes places and how is it contextual embedded? These issues have resulted into the first research question which is:

Where is (re)conceptualization - the formulation of norms and arguments for shaping action - likely to take place?

Then again, assuming that any conceptualized view as guiding principle could be pre-classified as being ‘the right view’, or being either ‘societal justified’ or not, raises new questions. What does it mean to hold on to this normative principle, consolidate this conception into the existing routines of practice and operate in compliance with this value-laden framework? Is it plausible to adopt and sustain a predetermined conception of collective interest while acknowledging its socially produced, dynamic and value-laden nature? However, when the normative organizing principles and discourses of one era become consolidated and embedded in practices, they might come to outlive their usefulness. (Healey, 2006) That is, embedding socially produced norms into the prevailing routines of practice might deprive the deeper meaning of these conceptualized fixes due to a tendency to be continuously consolidated and sustained rather than being reflected on an challenged. It seems a paradox to mythicize values and processes (Healey, P., 2007, Freire, P., 1970) as objective norms of truth while acknowledging their socially produced – therefore dynamic and biased – nature. On the
other hand, rejecting the consolidation of socially produced norms to prevent ‘mythification’ brings forward a second question. Is it legitimate to assume that any course of development, without having a consolidated guiding principle or regulating governance structure, will neutrally evolve in compliance with collective interest? That is, does collective interest as a guiding principle for development mean to challenge the governance structure from below? Or does it imply for the consolidation of dynamic norms to generate coherence, stability and accountability? These issues have resulted into the second research question which is:

How are conceptualized norms embedded into the routines of practice and consolidated to carry significant meanings and legitimacy to guide and mobilize action based on collective interest?

Therefore, this research will look at the ability of governance landscapes or structuring forces to create coherence and stability in dynamic and complex contexts while being challenged and (re)shaped itself through relational processes, rather than looking at the ability of the existing governance powers to impose normative blue-prints for transformation from a comprehensive planning perspective. (Healey, 2006, Harrison et al., 2007) That is, I will reflect on the relation between the ability of individuals to maintain the dynamics and socially produced nature of normative governance frameworks, and the power of these routines of practice to shape action through its own consolidation. The former can be conceived as the decision making power (executive) or the ability to reshape normative policy frameworks (legislative) ‘from below’, while the latter is about sustaining them in order to stabilize and focus the dynamics and relational complexity of socialization in diffuse and dynamic governance landscapes (judiciary).

As figure 2 (below) displays, I will reflect on the process in which a normative conception of ‘collective interest’ as guiding principle is simultaneously challenged from below while consolidated from above. The objective of this dynamic process would be to shape and reshape a balance or equilibrium between normative guidance and the dynamics of evolving conceptions, based on collective interest.

To conclude, the implications concerning the dynamic equilibrium based on shaping, consolidation and reshaping of normative conceptions will be more explicitly related to the design and planning
practices. As Healey has argued, “the planners’ ideas have molded the restructuring of existing urban areas, the design of new towns and settlements, and residential neighborhood design. They have affected the form and location of transport projects. They have shaped the evolution of urban street scenes through the impact of land use regulations. These regulations have in turn influenced the way land and property values are distributed and property development processes have evolved. Planners’ ideas achieved this impact by framing the organizing principles and discourses used by governments in developing policy frameworks and organizing competencies for planning ‘systems’” (Healey, 2006). That is, planning seems to be involved with the consolidation of normative directions for action into the routines of practice as a response to evolving stresses and opportunities which have been conceived.

However, does the consolidation of principles for normative guidance mean to ‘neutral’ plan and facilitate processes while following the organizing principles and discourses? Following the scope of this research, planning tends to be a value-laden activity itself. Therefore, it seems that the planning practice cannot be conceived as a neutral facilitating power, following public interest itself. Consequently, I will question where the politics of planning, the persuasive and seductive power of design, and collective interest intersect. This has resulted in the final research question which is:

**How can we envision a way of planning and design while following collective interest as a guiding principle within a value driven, dynamic and relational complex landscape?**

### Research Questions

- Where is (re)conceptualization - the formulation of norms and arguments for shaping action - likely to take place?
- How is it consolidated - relational embedded - to carry significant meanings and legitimacy to mobilize action?
- How can we envision a way of planning and design while following collective interest as a guiding principle within a value driven, dynamic and relational complex landscape?
**Statement - Cross-contextual transfer of knowledge: Learning**

As stated in the introduction, during the course of this research a gradual shift in learning research evolved from a focus on objectivity towards exploration and analysis of the cross-cultural and relational complex (Healey, 2006) social processes that constitute and guide the development of the conceived environment. This change in direction has been induced by the extreme differentiating frames of reference – as being the contextual bound reality through which a worldview is constructed – of myself in relation to the collaborating actors in Sri Lanka, involved in the knowledge building process. Moreover, the scientific environment in which this research has been conducted altered at several moments as well.

The initial scientific context can be conceived as being “performance oriented” (Bransford et al., 1999), characterised by the over-contextualization of conceptions due to a focus on objectivity. In this perspective, knowledge tends to be seen as the passive end product of a particular set of learning experiences. In contrary, the scientific environment in which the study has been completed can be conceived as being “learning oriented” (Bransford et al., 1999), characterised by abstract representations of conceptions due to a focus on the interdependent relation between ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’. In this perspective, knowledge building tends to be seen as “a dynamic process that requires learners to actively choose and evaluate strategies, consider resources, and receive feedback” (Bransford et al., 1999).

A focus on objectivity seems to imply the existence of a unitary neutral worldview or ‘objectified perception’ which denies temporality and is able to overcome the complexity of any contextual particularities. In contrary, acknowledging the subjective and contextually bound nature of conceptions seems to imply the dynamic, value-laden and biased nature of any worldview. However, in both perspectives learning seems to be involved with the transfer of knowledge and perceptions through relational processes.

The former perspective – the imperatives of prescribing exclusive perception – seems to imply that knowledge can be conceived as objectively verifiable and neutral data. In this conception, “knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing.” (Freire, 1970) In this “banking concept” (Freire, 1970), education becomes “an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. The scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filling and storing the deposits.” (Freire, 1970) This seems suggest that the learning environment has been designed to foster drill or even programming.

The latter view – acknowledging the subjective nature of conceptions – imply the contextual-bound and therefore biased nature of knowledge. This perspective seems to encourage intentional learning, reflection and communication (Brown, 1992) as methodologies for reflecting and acting upon ‘objectivities’ as being ‘consolidated subjectivities’. In this concept of “problem posing education” (Freire, 1970), by stimulating “perception of the previous perception” and “knowledge of the previous knowledge”, the appearance of a socially produced new perception and the development of new knowledge tends to be motivated. (Freire, 1970) That is, reflecting and acting upon the concepts of today – which can be conceived as consolidated subjectivities – can provide the perception, knowledge and concepts of tomorrow.
The problem-posing educator, as opposed to the “banking-concept” (Freire, 1970) “constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of the students. The students – no longer docile listeners – are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher.” Therefore, “in problem posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation.” (Freire, 1970) This perspective seems to imply an evolutionary process in which normative conceptualizations are socially produced through inclusive participation in a multi-contextual environment.

However, the suggested dualism between objective and subjective is only conceived for analytical purposes. Maintaining such an exclusive distinction would imply that consolidated subjectivities – as being ‘the objective’ – could be disconnected from the values – as being subjectivities – through which it has been constituted. Instead, this research follows a perspective that the objective and the subjective are in constant formative encounter through which both evolve and therefore are interdependent related. More concrete, as Ingold has stated, “knowledge is constructed through social processes, which filter what is experienced, observed and imagined as it is arranged into systems of meaning. These meanings are shaped by contexts, by purposes, by values and by power relations” (Ingold, 2005). Figure 3 (below) is a conceptualized interpretation of this process in which knowledge and meaning is constructed through their formative encounter, while inclusive values and social relations simultaneously evolve and are being co-constituted. (Healey, 2006, Freire, 1970).

![Figure 3](image)

**Figure 3 - Knowledge and Identity arranged into a system of meaning – interpretation based on (Freire, 1970, Healey, 2006)**

To conclude, this research has been completed in the perspective of focusing on the ability to discover and use knowledge – self-reflective learning and critical inquiry (Frederiksen, 1990) or problem posing (Freire, 1970) – rather than just retaining it – which tends to be equivalent to the banking concept of education (Freire, 1970).

---

Section I – Theoretical Framework

Introduction
In the first part of this study I will lay a theoretical foundation for gaining insight in the transformative potentials as well as the constraining limitations of normative conceptions which shape human behavior. This conceptualization will be utilized as a reflective framework for questioning if and how (value-laden) planning can be utilized as an instrument for delivering both the ‘objective’ conditions as well as the ‘subjective’ meaning which tends to be required for sustainability in development. The former can be seen as the structuring forces and policy frameworks which shape cultures and processes of governance. The latter can be seen as the perceived value which tends to determine the social support base and shaping power of the former.

The relevance of these issues seems to be profound in the contemporary network society which is characterized by a multiplicity of overlapping and intersecting relational networks. These functional associations tend to shape development processes while being driven by their contextual bound values. Hence, it can be argued that governance in this diffuse relational web tends to be a highly complex process. As Salet has stated, “in a period of oscillating levels of spatial scale the absence of a (social) support base is often a problem” (Salet et al., 2003) in so far as governing structures which are not covered by a density of social organizations usually lack the ‘institutional thickness’ to be truly effective (Putnam et al., 1993). Hence, the objective of this section is to generate a deeper understanding of the dynamics and complexity of ‘good governance’ in relational complex networks.

Without acknowledging that the particularities and dynamics of subjectivity can be comprehensively conceived, I will present an abstract conceptualization of the process in which context, values and perception co-evolve and constitute each other. This view does not provide a comprehensive account on the thematic literature. Instead, if follows the notion that (normative) concepts, values and perception tend to be socially produced. That is, a sociological approach is followed to the understanding and development of conceptualized norms which tend to guide development processes (Habermas, 1984, Freire, 1970, Healey, 2006). The sociological term refers to the way that normative concepts for shaping action are produced and evolve through relational processes.

Hence, I will explore the socially constructed nature of values, meaning and normative concepts, and the complex relation between such situated ways of perceiving the world and the capacity, through relational processes, to challenge and change these world views (Healey, 2006, Freire, 1970). In the course of this focus, I will conceive what the normative principles which tend to shape development processes are, how these conceptions evolve, how are they produced while simultaneously being consumed, and how they are embedded into and intersect with their contextual environment. That is, I will conceptualize the process in which societal norms and policy frameworks for shaping action evolve and how they become contextual embedded.

The main objective of the first chapter is to explore where legitimacy and meaning is situated in normative driven development processes. In the second chapter, I will situate the discourse in the relational complexity and dynamics in which life in movement is experienced. Hence, I will extend the discourse towards development planning in relation to themes of governance and relational decision making processes. In this, I will try to find ways to bring diverse actors together in networks of collaboration and mutual learning and how collaborative forms of planning may assist in doing this.
Chapter 1 - Legitimacy in development

Introduction
Life in movement can be conceived as a dynamic process being shaped by the conditions under which society develops, which in turn, is reflected in human perception and subjective responses (Heynen, 1999). That is, as Freire stated, the world is a reality in process, constantly shaped through people’s thinking about and action upon it” (Freire, 1970). Or, as Healey noted, “an urban region is not ‘a thing’, to which an analyst can approximate an ‘objective’ representation. It is an imagined phenomenon, a conception of a very complex set of overlapping an intersecting relations, understood in different ways” (Healey, 2006).

Nonetheless, since it is seems to be a concrete situation in which ‘life in movement’ is established, it might be argued that it is objectively verifiable; if framed in context and time. That is, it could be argued that the dynamics and complexity of a ‘reality in process’ (Freire, 1970) can be ‘objectified’ through an act of recognition, summoning up, naming and framing (Healey, 2006). Hence, these socially produced (objectified) conceptions seems to exist in people in their relations with the world, with reference to concrete facts. They cannot be found in people divorced from the context to which they refer, nor yet in this context divorced from people, and neither in no man’s land. It can only be apprehended in their interdependent relationship (Freire, 1970). This seems to imply that objectivism in this matter can’t be separated from subjectivism. Instead, they are interdependent

The relation between ‘the objective’ and ‘the subjective’ through which ‘objectified conceptions’ are constructed seem to reject the possibility of ‘pure objectivity’ - as being an absolute truth. At the same time it seems to deny a “hopeless quagmire of subjective relativity, a situation in which each interpretation is finally judged to be as valid as others”(Fischer, 2003). Instead, ‘the objective’ and ‘subjective’ seems to be in constant formative encounter. Hence, it can be concluded that it is not that facts or values do not play a role, rather it is that they are embedded in relational accounts which provide meaning and therefore constitute their social legitimacy.

Understanding conceptual change
This seems to imply that the conceptualization and designing process to encourage, plan or shape development needs to give particular attention to where ‘reflection’ is likely to take place. That is, as Healey has argued, when the definition of normative conception is emerging, whose efforts are critical to its formulation? Following the conception of ‘live in movement’ as a relational account which constitutes an understanding of people’s position in the world, it can be concluded that the point of departure for planning or shaping a course of meaningful or social legitimate development lies in people themselves.

Moreover, as Freire has argued, “since people do not exist apart from the world, apart from reality, the movement must begin with the human-world relationship. (...) The point of departure must always be with men and women in the here and now, which constitutes the situation within which they are submerged and intervene. Only by starting from this situation – which determines their perception of it – can they begin to move” (Freire, 1970). Figure 5 (below) illustrates how the ‘human-world relationship’ constitutes the starting point for ‘meaningful transformation’ through
critical reflection and critical intervention. This can be seen as their praxis, as being ‘people’s thinking about and action upon reality’ in order to transform it (Freire, 1970).

Moreover, it can be argued that, as Freire continues, “it is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, not to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours. We must realize that their view of the world, manifested variously in their action, reflects their situation in the world” (Freire, 1970). That is, conceiving a meaningful and legitimate direction for development seems to be involved with the separation from and objectification of the world in order to transform it. This reflective process is bound up with the process in which actors become more aware of themselves as learners who, as Bransford stated, “actively monitor their learning strategies and resources and assess their readiness for particular tests and performances” (Bransford et al., 1999).

However, as Bransford continuous, “one’s existing knowledge can also make it difficult to learn new information. Sometimes, new information will seem incomprehensible” (Bransford et al., 1999). This implies that reflection not necessarily lead towards the appearance of a “perception of the previous perception” and “knowledge of the previous knowledge” (Freire, 1970), a process which can be defined as ‘transfer’ (Bransford et al., 1999). This implies that transformative development and meaningful change are inherent to the ability to actively learn and identify challenges and constraints to bring about meaningful change (Healey, 2006).

Hence, legitimacy or meaning in development seems to be involved with metacognition or ‘sense-making’ (Healey, 2006) to stimulate processes of ‘active transfer’. In this perspective, learning is seen as a dynamic process that requires learners to actively choose and evaluate strategies, consider resources, and receive feedback (Bransford et al., 1999). That is, active transfer is a “striving towards awareness of reality and towards self-awareness, which makes this investigation a starting point for the educational process or for cultural action” (Freire, 1970). This is opposed to a ‘passive’ approach, in which “transfer is adequately reflected by learners’ abilities to solve a set of transfer problems right after they have engaged in an initial learning task” (Bransford et al., 1999). That is, a passive approach to transfer implies that knowledge can be seen as the end product of a particular set of
learning experiences, or as a gift that can be deposited from one upon another. However, as noted by Bransford, “under these conditions, the learner doesn’t realize that he or she is failing to understand” (Bransford et al., 1999).

Figure 6 (below) displays an abstract representation of this process in which ‘active transfer’ can lead towards a meaningful or legitimate direction for transformative action. In the next section, I will explain this figure as a reflective conclusion on this on this chapter.

![Diagram of learning processes](image)

**Figure 5** - ‘sense making’ to induce transformation. Interpretation based on (Healey, 2006, Freire, 1970, Bransford et al., 1999)

**Conclusion**
As displayed in figure 5 and argued in this chapter, the starting point for development planning is a contextual bound ‘human-world’ relationship. This ‘coded situation’ (Freire, 1970) comprises the conditions under which society develops, the human perception and subjective responses, as well as the reality to which they refer. The relational account in which they are embedded provides meaning and constitutes their social legitimacy. Hence, it has been argued ‘meaningful development’ must be a cognitive exercise in which identity construction and normative conceptions co-evolve and constitute each other. It is through this relationship through which material effects come about. Hence, this perspective places particular attention on the process of conceptualization or ‘sense-making’ (Healey, 2006).
It is through critical reflection (decoding) that a meaningful conception\(^2\) of the ideas, values, hopes and obstacles which constitute the ‘human-world’ relation is constructed. The product is a value-laden and meaningful social norm which represents the situation in which people are submerged. That is, this socially produced conception or ‘theme’ (Freire, 1970) is the way in which people exist in the world, with which and in which they find themselves. However, as stated by Bransford, “one’s existing knowledge can also make it difficult to learn new information” (Bransford et al., 1999). Although this confusion might restrain the ability to focus, conceive and critically reflect on the situation in which they are submerged, it might help identify the existence of an opportunity or problem.

As Freire has noted, “as they locate the seat of their decisions in themselves and in their relations with the world and others, people overcome the situations which limit them” (Freire, 1970). Consequently, it can be argued that legitimacy in development cannot be achieved through a technical exercise of prescription. Instead, it involves an active process of transfer in which the concept of elements needs to be defined cognitively, rather than prescribed. That is, legitimacy in development it is conceived as a learning process which can adjust perspectives and generate meaning (Faludi, 2000) before taking action.

In the course of this focus, in the next chapter I will extend the discourse of ‘legitimacy in normative driven development’ by introducing the dynamic and relational complex nature of life in movement. Following this notion, I will question if and how planning practice can help to make sense and focus in relational complex decision making arenas, induce processes of mutual learning, stimulate and coordinate collaboration and contribute to a course of legitimacy in development. That is, I will question if and how planning can help producing challenging directions in relational complex networks to achieve meaningful change (see figure 6).

---

\(^2\) This has been conceived as ‘themes’ by Paulo Freire; “Themes exist in people in their relations with the world, with reference to concrete facts” FRIE, P. (1970) Pedagogy of the oppressed, [New York], Herder and Herder..
Chapter 2 – A relational perspective

Introduction
The introduced notion of the social produced nature of context, lived experience, and normative concepts in the previous section, seems to imply that change is continuous in what changes (context), how it changes (normative guided process), and in what we see as good (lived experience or perception). All this is reflected in values and meaning and the evolving consolidated subjectivities such as cultures, policies, relational networks or the physical environment. These seem to be both formative and adaptive; they both influence and express conditions, ideologies, perceptions, practices and priorities (Chambers, 2005). That is, the contextual environment and the dynamics of flows are in continuous formative encounter through which both evolve. They generate opportunities, stresses and trajectories which may only be identified as they emerge. This seems to imply the complex and dynamic nature of the social processes through which life in movement is experienced. More particular, this conception emphasizes the existence of multiple relational networks and of nodes where they intersect (Healey, 2006).

This leads to a concern with the connection between relational dynamics, relational conception an relational meaning and with the continual search for ways to bring diverse actors together in networks of collaboration and mutual learning. In the course of this, as Healey has argued, “planners and urbanists have struggled to find ways to synthesis the complex socio-spatial dynamics of cities, with their multiple layers of relations operating at diverse scales and often in conflict with each other, and to shape some kind of integrated conception, through which the city can be ‘seen’ and grasped” (Healey, 2006). This seems to stress the stress the complexity of interactions that take place in specific social ‘sites’ or nodal sites in networks (Healey, 2006).

Complexity, dynamics and legitimacy
In chapter one, it has been argued that legitimacy in value-driven development tends to be inherent to metacognition and active transfer. Moreover, these learning processes seem to be deeply rooted into the historical situation within which they are submerged and intervene (Freire, 1970). As argued in the first chapter and illustrated in figure 8, it can be argued that legitimacy in development is

---

3 Figure 8 is an abstract representation of ‘life in movement’, framed in time and context. However, this study acknowledges that in reality the complexity of internal dynamics and outside process is cannot be comprehensively conceived. Moreover, the abstract presentation of social processes in this study is a methodological choice set out to facilitate ‘active transfer’ or learning BRANSFORD, J., BROWN, A. L., COCKING,
contextually bound. However, would ‘legitimacy’ maintain its validity when the context in which it is rooted, the normative principle or conception which it constitutes, or the perception through which it evolves is being transformed?

As stated before, these questions seem particular evident in the contemporary network society which is characterized by a tension between ‘places’ and ‘flows’ (Castells, 1996), as well as a multiplicity of dynamic overlapping and intersecting relational networks. These functional associations tend to shape development processes while they might vary substantially in both their internal dynamics and the way that responses are made to outside pressures. As Healey has noted, “this network language not only emphasizes the complex socio-spatial relations between physical spaces, places of meaning and the spatial patterning produced through dynamic social and economic networks; it also stresses the complex ways in which networks, or webs, overlay each other and reach out to others elsewhere in space and time” (Healey, 2006).

Hence, it has been argued that the multiplicity of actors in relational webs cannot be understood as rational integrated unities following a coherent course of development while being contained within clearly defined boundaries. Instead, as explained in chapter one, they are social constructions evolving through the reflection and action of actors in multiple networks. Their value, as Healey notes, “must me sought in the way the experimental meanings of ‘place’ have ‘presence’ in these complex, shifting and conflicting relations through which the experience of daily life in urban areas is constituted”(Healey, 2006). Consequently, it can be argued that the potentialities and stresses embedded in relational webs cannot be comprehensively conceived or analyzed as ‘a thing’. Instead,
as argued in chapter one, a meaningful conception of the ideas, values, hopes and obstacles which constitute relational accounts is socially constructed through a process of metacognition, ‘active transfer’, or learning (Freire, 1970). This perspective focuses on the imaginative effort to make sense of potentialities and possibilities from multiple unfolding relations and simultaneously build meaningful knowledge construct identity⁴.

**Power**

Collective sense-making has been conceived as a relational and negotiation based process in which a meaningful social norm or direction for action – a concrete representation of ideas, values, concepts, and hopes, as well as obstacles – is constructed through collective reasoning. This process is oriented towards the goal of coming to a meaningful and legitimate conceptualized norm to bring about contextual bound change based on mutual interest (Freire, 1970, Healey, 2006). However, relational processes tend to take place in particular configurations of power(Harrison et al., 2007). This seems to be controversial in so far as it tends to distort the relations for collaboration and mutual learning. Hence, it remains to be seen if collective reasoning and mutual learning results in collective outcome. In the course of this, Klijn and Teisman have noted, “synergy and joint development are still theoretical words which cannot be achieved in existing decision-making arena’s” (Klijn and Teisman, 2002).

Hence, it seems that contextual bound negotiation processes need to be relationally embedded in order to carry significant meanings and legitimacy to shape a course of development. This implies that ‘collaborative sense-making’ needs to be positioned in specific institutional contexts to develop and maintain focus. The consolidation of this process into the routines of practice seems to shift the discourse toward linking and shaping decision taken within various relational networks. More concrete, collective sense-making embedded in institutional sites can be conceived as governance, as being, following Healey, “collective action promoted as for public purposes, wider than the purposes of individual agents” (Healey, 2006). In this way, actors, agents, learners or institutions seem to become responsive and responsible through a regulating system of public interest.

It could be argued that such normative prescription in development is a legitimate matter for politicians, as long as there are procedures – such as elections – for ensuring that those politicians are responsive, and can be held responsible to its citizens (Needham, 2007). That is, the societal legitimacy of value-driven development could be depending on the ability of the electorate to vote, which is a purely technical exercise. However, can it be argued that the electorate is given the opportunity to actively choose or vote for meaningful normative conceptions which are responsive to their contextual particularities?

In the course of this focus, it has been argued that the ‘consolidation into routines of practice’ implies that the dynamics of learning and shaping will be constrained by demarcation lines between the various governance network. These institutionalized boundaries might act as barriers against cooperation, reflective learning and legitimacy in development. That is, there seems to be a tendency

⁴ This has been discussed in the section concerning the cross-contextual transfer of learning. As noted, in this process knowledge and meaning are constructed through their formative encounter, while inclusive values and social relations simultaneously evolve and are being co-constituted.
for consolidated norms to co-evolve with ‘ways of governing’ and constitute a governance culture (Healey, 2006). This seems to reemphasize the socially produced nature of governance processes and its tendency to be biased itself. These structuring processes therefore seem to be influenced by the values of historical-bound governance cultures which not necessarily represent the societal relational values through which they were constructed. That is, if governance processes are shaped by historical governance cultures – which seem to represent the ‘consolidated subjectivities of the past’ – wouldn’t these organizing principles and discourses of one era come to outlive their usefulness? (Healey, 2006)

Hence, there seems to be a paradox. On the one hand, as noted before, dynamics, complexity and power relations seems to require a regulatory framework for responsiveness and accountability in the decision making arena, to focus and guard the legitimacy of collaborative development. On the other hand, the legitimacy and meaning of value-laden conceptions which evolve through collaboration and mutual learning could be hampered by the same governmental domains. Thus, it seems problematic for public authorities to control and safeguard the legitimacy, meaning and public interest in relational networks, while the necessity for linking decisions taken within the various involved networks seems to be pressing (Klijn and Teisman, 2002).

**Conclusion**

If power, ideology and governance cultures were the only important explanatory dimensions for shaping meaningful development, decisions and action would only be a question of whose domination should we submit to. But, as Fischer states, “some stories are more truthful and humane than other, which can be sorted out through the discursive logic of good reason. And in politics in a democratic society the struggle for power is in significant part played out over time through arguments about the ‘best story’” (Fischer, 2003). Following the previous chapter, a ‘social legitimate story’ needs to evolve through imaginative efforts to make sense of potentialities and possibilities from multiple unfolding relations. That is, a meaningful conception of the ideas, values, hopes and obstacles which constitute relational accounts needs to be socially constructed through a process of metacognition, ‘active transfer’, or learning (Freire, 1970).

However, as argued, it seems that legitimacy in shaping or planning development is bound up with the relation between the power of individuals to influence and reshape the consolidated structuring principles which guide their actions on the one hand, and the regulating capabilities of these routines of practice to safeguard social legitimacy in development by generating accountability on the other. Consequently, it can be argued that the meaning and legitimacy of stories and normative conceptions need to be created in such a way that it build up power to challenge and transform the ‘consolidated stories of the past’.

Both the dynamics and complexity of social legitimate governance in relational networks seem to challenge (spatial) planning practices. The suggested development planning perspective moves far beyond the traditional conception of generating blue-prints or a focus on the delivery of pre-fabricated interventions. Instead, this learning oriented view seems to emphasize collaboration, reflection and mutual learning in order to produce meaningful motivating power and “create a powerful focus for action, knowledge formulation and identity construction through which material effects come about” (Healey, 2006).
It might be argued that “specialized knowledge puts them (planners) in a position to say what the goals should be” (Needham, 2007). However, as stated, knowledge is socially produced and therefore planners cannot be seen as neutral actors. Another option would be to see planners as ‘story tellers’ who might induce ‘active transfer’ and mutual learning processes through responsive collaboration. In this case, planning practice would be involved with the design of indicative plans for inducing the process in which meaningful knowledge is built. More particular, the planning process could be involved with the production of frames of reference through collaboration. This might provide internal actors with an opportunity to determine which issues they find important and bring these into policy attention and it can provide governing powers a wealth of information to solve relational conflicts of interest, while it might induce the social base and ‘institutional thickness’ to do something about it.
Section II – Empirical reflections

Introduction
In the previous chapters I have outlined the value-laden and biased nature of conceptions, the problems of generating and consolidating representative or meaningful principles in relational complex and dynamic landscapes, and the contextualization of normative conceptions around issues of power and meaning. The theory which has been developed has drawn out an understanding of the transformative potential and limits of normative conceptions for shaping a course of development. In the course of this focus, I have posed several fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of planning. These issues are related to the values that should guide the planning practice, how universal or particular these can be, and its role in relation to contextual particularities.

In the following chapters I will try to situate the presented theoretical framework in the dynamics and complexity of a particular history and geography, which is the precarious social fabric of Sri Lanka. In this dynamic and relational complex context, characterized by a multiplicity of value driven actors and ethnical segregation, it seems logical to question the legitimacy and meaning of the guiding principle as being a value-laden conception. As noted by Uyangoda, “contemporary Sri Lanka presents a key disjuncture in the experience of modern nation state formation as seen in many other societies as well. It refers to the fundamental dichotomy between the multiple ethnic constitution of society and the unitarist organization of state power” (Uyangoda, 2005).

Consequently, the ethnic divided society and governance landscape in which political authority is position at the centre, seems to bring forward fundamental questions about values in decision making processes and their legitimacy (Healey, 2006). Therefore, in concrete, the objective of this chapter will be to reflect in this particular case how planning could function as an instrument which might deliver both the ‘objective conditions’ – such as normative principles or hard infrastructure – to focus and guide development process, as well as the social consensus and ‘institutional thickness’ to maintain its meaning which tends to raise its legitimacy and induce sustainability.
Chapter 3 – Narrative Analysis

Introduction
There can be different interpretations of what the conceptions may mean, and the focus within the relational complex and dynamic landscape is absolutely biased by my own values and norms. Hence, it can be argued that the case study which I present cannot be posed as a neutral or comprehensive description and analysis. As discussed in section one, conceptions tend to be contextual-bound and biased due to their socially produced nature. Consequently, considering the nature of my own ‘value-laden lens’ through which I have approached this task, it seems necessary to define how this chapter contributes to larger knowledge building processes than my own perspective. Subsequently, the challenge in this chapter will be to show the particularity of the presented case, while providing material with which to explore what it has to say about the theory discussed in the previous chapters.

Contextual background – ethnic conflict
There is a tendency to treat the Sri Lankan conflict between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil minority, as one of ethnic conflict or religious conflict between Buddhism and Hinduism. However, Sinhalese and Tamil identity based on language and religion that we observe today, arose after the independence of the country. (Japan Bank for International Cooperation., 2003) The conflict can be partially explained by the island’s historical formation of its ethnic society and by the colonization by Western powers in the 16th century. One theory is that a divide and rule policy undertaken by the British before independence in 1948, in which importance was intentionally placed on a minority ethnic group (the Tamils), led to reactions by the majority Sinhalese. In general it is argued that the most important direct aspect concerning the ethnic conflict must be the numerous Sinhala domination policies which were undertaken after independence in 1948. Examples of the upsurge of Sinhalese nationalism which induced the exclusion of, and conflict with other groups are related to language policies, irrigation projects, settlement projects, university entrance, development investments. Consequently, throughout the political process after the independence, the possibility of co-existence of ethnic groups was lost due to these policies that would be accepted by the majority Sinhalese. (Japan Bank for International Cooperation., 2003) As a result, the grievance between the minority Tamils and the majority Sinhalese is embedded in existing social, political and economic structures. And, though the ethnic war has been primarily fought between the Sinhalese state and the militant Tamil nationalists, the complexity and ethnic segregation of society is further induced by claims for autonomy by a Muslim minority.

Contextual background - tsunami
In the North and East of Sri Lanka, the tsunami induced the suffering and deprivation caused by more than two decades of civil war. The prolonged conflict had already taken more than 70,000 lives, resulted into the internal displacement of up to 900,000 people (Tsunami Evaluation Coalition., 2006) and caused severe damage to the social, political and physical infrastructure. The administrative divisions affected by the tsunami were concentrated in the Southern and North Eastern Province.
The latter was primarily dominated by the separatist movement of the Tamils. At the time of the natural disaster, a ceasefire prevailed which left certain parts of the North and East under the territorial control of the separatist movement of the minority Tamil (LTTE), hence restricting the government’s access and the free flow of humanitarian assistance to these areas. Hence, immediately following the tsunami a dispute erupted between the government and the separatist movement of the minority Tamils (LTTE or Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) over the mechanics of administering aid to cleared and uncleared areas. The prospects of a massive injection of foreign and domestic investment coupled with the possibilities of consolidating political legitimacy, authority and strategic control over territory and affected populations raised the stakes. The LTTE considered itself an equal partner to the state in the recovery and reconstruction process while representatives of the government and armed forces disagreed and doubted the sincerity of the LTTE at all stages. (Muggah, 2008) Consequently, the value driven rivalry between Sinhala nationalism and the separatist movement of minority Tamils disrupted the efforts to conceive a guiding principle or policy framework based on collective interest.

In this complex relational landscape, the humanitarian response - both globally and locally – had an impact of a mixed character. On the one hand, it created opportunities for constructive participation of governmental agencies, the market and civil society to develop their individual value-driven objectives through inclusive cooperation. On the other hand, a lack of both institutional capacity and structures of ‘good governance’ resulted into a distortion of priorities and tended to constrain the ability to grasp evolving potentialities and regulate stresses.

Narrative analysis or Storytelling
As discussed in chapter one, the interdependent relationship between ‘the objective’ and ‘the subjective’ through which social meaning is constructed seems to reject the possibility of ‘pure objectivity’ - as being an absolute truth. At the same time it denies a “hopeless quagmire of subjective relativity, a situation in which each interpretation is finally judged to be as valid as others.”(Fischer, 2003) Subsequently, this research follows an understanding of ‘the objective’ and ‘subjective’ as being in constant formative encounter through which both evolve. Hence, it can be concluded that it is not that facts do not play a role, rather it is that they are embedded in subjective and relational accounts which provide meaning.

Rejecting the possibility of either pure objectivity or pure subjectivity, I align myself with a case-study approach which tends to be open to conceiving both in their interdependent relation. I will do this by following the theoretical themes presented in the previous chapters as a normative framework for empirical inquiry. By doing so, it seems that the theory – as being conceptualized subjectivities – can function as a frame of reference to relate contextual particularities – as value-laden subjectivities – to a larger consolidated knowledgebase. As Fischer has stated, narrative approaches tend to be better suited than empirical analysis to render an understanding of social change. As “storytelling” (Healey, 2006), narrative analysis can be seen as “to expand our conception of knowledge beyond the narrow confines of observational statements and logical proof to include and understanding of the ways people are embedded in the wider social contexts of situation and society.” (Fischer, 2003) Consequently, I will follow a narrative approach to assess contextual bound
Conducting Case study research in Sri Lanka

An underlying notion for undertaking case study research in Sri Lanka has been the enormous multiplicity of intersecting, diverging and converging interests, value driven actors and directions for action, induced by the tsunami disaster. As noted before, the December 2004 tsunami in the South Asian coast inspired one of the largest international emergency relief and recovery operations ever undertaken (Tsunami Evaluation Coalition., 2006). It led to the most rapid and spontaneous outpouring of aid on record, stimulated in part, by Western media reports of ‘white suffering’ in coastal resorts and game parks (Muggah, 2008). At the same time, Sri Lanka’s conflict and a legacy of mutual mistrust between the predominantly Sinhalese (the ethnic majority) government and the separatist movement (LTTE) of the minority Tamils highly politicized the principles for allocating the enormous inflow of resources and managing the processes of relief, recovery and human development. Consequently, although this might seems a rare event, I would nonetheless argue that it presents a significant learning opportunity for planning in all contexts.

First of all, this highly sensitive and value-laden governance landscape seems to bring forward fundamental questions about ethical values which can guide a course of development and how universal or particular these can be. These questions seem to be directly related to the transferability of (normative) conceptions and ideas, as discussed in the previous chapters. Secondly, the dynamic and complex ‘layering’ of multiple social relations (Healey, 2006), each with their own dynamics and reach seems to allow an examination of the possibilities of the process of change itself. (Harrison et al., 2007) Aligning myself with a narrative approach, I will try to describe an interpretation of how a multiplicity of value-driven organizational goals seems to be related to human outcome through a course of development. More particular, I will question if planned collective action eventually results in collective outcome.

Constraints and Opportunities

Conducting field research in this highly politicized governance landscape generated not only opportunities concerning learning and knowledge building, but dilemmas as well. On the one hand, this highly transformative process allowed access to actually occurring phenomena and personal exposure to the actors and agents ‘on the ground’. Concurrently, the extreme differentiating frames of reference – as being the contextual bound reality through which a worldview is constructed – of the actors involved in the knowledge building process severely challenged the communicative processes. This can be seen either as a constraint for the imperatives of value-driven development, or as an opportunity for reflective learning.

In this research, as noted before, knowledge building has been understood as the reflection and action upon the concepts of today through relational processes. Therefore, it can be noted that knowledge is socially produced, rather than being conceived through isolated interventions in both time and relational-reach. Consequently, the research focus involves the product of continual cultural interaction between the context available to those thinking about the scope of intervention
in social systems (the outsider looking in), and the agenda of contextual bound and socially embedded problems and opportunities which are attempted to address (the view of internal participant). It is through their formative encounter that knowledge and meaning is constructed, while inclusive values and social relations simultaneously evolve and are being co-constituted (see figure 1). Consequently, it can be argued that (participatory) research produce new subjectivities which tend to transform a social context in which it intervenes. Taking into account the precarious social context of Sri Lanka, the significant contrast between a contextual-bound world view of the external actor, and the value-laden perception of the internal participant, seems to have challenged the inter-action between ‘exogenous’ and ‘endogenous’. This seems to recognize the vital role of socially inclusive research and to develop a cross-cultural process of mutual learning. (Stein, 2005)

Considering the multiplicity of value-driven actors with their own scalar reach depending on their decision making power, and the absence of an inclusive regulating guiding principle based on mutual interest, it seemed that the only way ‘do’ research in otherwise inaccessible areas was to participate in the relief effort itself. Considering my personal normative framework, it seems a paradox trying to contribute to a knowledgebase concerning ‘collective interest as a guiding principle for shaping action’, while denying the interest of the ‘collective’ which is involved in this research. Therefore, during the course of this study a negotiation based platform has evolved which has been utilized to build ‘theory from the ground’, while being involved with capacity building and empowerment objectives in practice, through inclusive participation. In the course of this focus, it seems that further research can be conducted on the emergence of an economic and socio-political contract or strategic partnership between science on one side, and the state, private commercial interests and civil society on the other, precipitated by globalization.
Chapter 4 – Case Sri Lanka

Introduction
The complexity within the value-driven governance landscape of Sri Lanka tended to induced by the multiplicity of value driven global humanitarian actors which were mobilized by the seductive power of the tsunami. On the one hand, a combination of multilateral donors and international financial agencies attempted to centralise their relief and reconstruction through state mechanisms. In addition, a multiplicity of non-governmental agencies and civil society organisations, the latter often almost entirely composed of individuals with existing religious, kinship and familial ties to the environment in which they intervened, contributed to the humanitarian project (Muggah, 2008). That is, a multiplicity of ideologies in terms of state-directed planning - as the state is itself a biased structure where human agency and human values play a strong role - and various forms of diverging value driven interventions emerged outside the formal institutional framework within which the endogenous routines of practice are embedded.

In this chapter I will present an overview of the particularities of the governance landscape of Sri Lanka is. I will place particular attention on the ethnic-conflict related values embedded in public policy and the role of international donor responses. To illustrate the social relevance, I will end with a brief illustration of a post-tsunami resettlement project in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka.

Administrative Structure
For administrative purposes the land area in Sri Lanka has been divided into nine provinces with each of them subdivided into districts, of which the country comprises 25. In turn, each district comprises a multiplicity of administrative divisions (DS divisions) – 280 in total – which are subdivided into ‘Grama Niladhari’ (GN divisions) as lowest administrative tier. The civil service at each administrative level is functioning under the leadership of a development officer who has been appointed by the central government, hence being a direct representative of the central state.

Throughout the early stages of the independent period, the framework of a centralized unitary constitution – a heritage of the colonial era – shaped the government structure and political evolution. A system of district administration has been developed during the era of British colonial rule in order to implement governmental activities such as service delivery at the regional level. Consequently, legislative and executive powers were centered at the top, while the local government structures – the districts – were concerned with the execution of national policy. In this model, local development was primarily involved with the decentralization of administrative structures to the community level.

However, from the late 1970s onwards, several steps have been
taken for decentralization of authority and transfer of power. The underlying notion for taking these steps has been inherent to issues of regional autonomy and ethnic conflict as well as to economic motives, which will be discussed in the following sections. The preceding discourse, in general, tended to be concerned with both the devolution of decision making power among different levels of government (public-public), as well as with the transfer of decision making power from governments to markets (public-private). Sri Lanka has evolved a great deal in the latter through a far reaching process of economic reform which was bound up with the liberalization of the economy. The former initiative of devolution, in contrary, tends to exist more in form that in substance. (Uyangoda, 2007, Saito, 2008, Japan Bank for International Cooperation., 2003)

Before completing a comprehensive conception of the Sri Lankan public governance system, I will discuss the prevailing governance culture in Sri Lanka, Subsequently, I will reflect on both mentioned conceptions of transfer of authority. First of all, the devolution of power between different levels of government will be discussed to conceive the process in which values and consolidated governance cultures tend to shape the transformative processes for devolution of power. This conception will provide a frame of reference to relate the contextual particularities of two illustrative projects as ‘narratives’ to the larger theoretical framework and contribute to larger knowledge building processes. Secondly, the cross-sectoral transfer of power between ‘public and private’ will be discussed in order to illustrate the role and position of international development assistance organizations in the Sri Lankan society and its tendency to induce the relational complexity. Consequently, the multiplicity of post-tsunami humanitarian responses which tend to induce the complexity within the Sri Lankan governance landscape can be related to a larger historical perspective.

**Governance culture**

The Sri Lankan decision making arena tends to be shaped by the value-laden product based on decades of ethnical segregation and conflict. Hence, in this context it seems extremely evident that these structuring processes cannot be seen as neutral representatives following public interest. Instead, they seem to be consolidated subjectivities which tend to be biased itself and influenced by the values of (historical-bound) ‘ways of governing’. More particular, as Harrison has noted, “there will always be the problem of bureaucracies peopled with individuals who are likely to be resistant to change, perhaps for political reasons, for reasons related to a desire to maintain particular positions of power and influence, or perhaps due to ignorance and a lack of understanding of alternatives” (Harrison et al., 2007).

For instance, the political discourse in Sri Lanka tends to be following a believe that ruling parties have a privileged monopoly in the decision making arena. Another example is the mythification of the Sinhala-Tamil relation. Although the societal segregation tends to be much wider than this ethnic relation, the political discourse and scope of action is generally bound-up the assumption that the Tamil nationalist group was the sole negotiation partner. Hence, for instance, state driven governance processes have been based on the belief that the resolution of ethnic conflict should be the responsibility and the task of the ruling Sinhalese state and the militant Tamil nationalists. As Uyangoda has argued, “in all negotiation attempts, the settlement effort has been confined to these two principal parties to the conflict” (Uyangoda, 2005).
In return, the opposition parties and societal organizations which tended to be excluded from the negotiation table or being denied in decision making processes have responded with resistance. For instance, a habit of the opposition to “politicize the negotiation process for partisan and electoral gains” (Uyangoda, 2005) affected the popular support and legitimacy for conflict resolution through political means. Consequently, it seems to be extremely evident that the decision making arena tends to be biased itself. The dominating political parties tend to act in compliance with existing governance cultures while the opposition tends to be responsive to these historical embedded ‘ways of governing’. Hence, it can be argued that the electorate is denied the opportunity to actively choose for meaningful normative conceptions which are responsive to their contextual particularities.

It can be argued that state-led development in Sri Lanka is a top-down imperative exercise of normative prescription. Following this perspective, in the next sections I will reflect on the ethnicized political evolution of the Sri Lankan government system. My particular interest will be on the devolution exercise as an attempt to resolve conflict ‘from above’. Consequently, I will provide a comprehensive conception of the operability of the political structuring forces and question its legitimacy.

System of Government

The Sri Lankan government system can be defined as a decentralized unitary state in which decision making power – in practice – is concentrated at the center. As stated, the government structure has been distributed over the provincial, district and divisional level civil service. Development officers on every administrative level have been appointed by the nation-state to implement national policies. Hence, it seems that public governance can be conceived as a “centralized exercise of state powers and de-concentrated delivery of services” (Saito, 2008, Uyangoda, 2007). However, as Uyangoda has stated, “after several decades of conflictual ethnic politics, leading sections of the Sinhalese ruling elite have come to realize the need for altering the unitarist bases of the Sri Lankan state within a framework of ethnicity-based power sharing” (Uyangoda, 2005).

Hence, the country’s constitution has incorporated a principle of ‘devolution of authority’ in its structural governance framework in 1987. By means of the ‘13th amendment’, devolution was to be achieved through a new intermediate tier of elected provincial councils. In concrete, a new structure of elected government bodies had been superimposed onto the existing district administrative structure, which resulted into a dualistic system of sub-national governmental practices. This attempt, as Rotberg has stated, “is often seen as the most significant measure so far to redress the imbalances in the relationships among different ethnic groups in the country” (Rotberg, 1999).

---

5 Annex 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the operability of the Sri Lankan system of government.
**Power transfer – Public - Public**

It has been argued that a 1987 devolution initiative was initiated by the nation-state government in response to demands for regional autonomy from the Tamil ethnic minority. In contrary, there was no such demand for devolution from the Sinhalese majority (Saito, 2008, Uyangoda, 2007). In addition, political pressure from the government of neighboring India to pursue ‘a political rather than a military solution to the ethnic problem’ (Bastian, 1994), as well as arguments from global civil society institutions further contributed to initiating the transfer of authority. Consequently, it can be argued that motives and underlying notions for devolution have been exclusively conceived by the center as an attempt to resolve the ethnic conflict without the legitimacy and perceived consent of the ethnic majority. This seems to imply that ethnic segregation could be resolved through an exclusive politicized course of development.

However, as Uyangoda has noted, power sharing in an ethnically divided society is a highly complex political exercise, because of the ethnic political fears generated by the presence in society of a protracted ethnic conflict. This paradox is further complicated by the tendency for political communities to think and act as ethnic communities first. Their political worth is believed to derive from their ethnicity. In other words, their worlds of political imagination and action are ethnicized. Consequently, as Uyangoda continues, “the paradox of ethnic politics is that while it has provided the framework for conflict and has failed to provide democratically emancipatory options, it is also the framework within which a solution to the conflict has to be initially conceptualized” (Uyangoda, 2005).

**Power transfer - Public-Private**

In 1977 there was a major political regime change in Sri Lanka due to which a new constitution was adopted as a mode to liberalize the economy. The removal of foreign exchange restrictions and liberalization of market greatly influenced Sri Lanka’s international and inter-sectoral power relations. Hence, the far reaching program of economic reforms enabled both the international agencies and aid donors to increase the volume of aid. These measures were highly valued by the development assistance organizations of the West and Japan. As a result, development assistance rapidly rose to more than double the pre-1977 levels. Since then it has become an integral part of Sri Lankan society and the normative concepts, ideas and discourses expounded by these agencies have become ideologically influential at the level of civil society. However, it has been argued that international donors were not only unaware of the situation of deteriorating ethnic relations, they also undertook the funding of projects that in hindsight, had direct political implications on ethnic relations.

This was particular evident in the large-scale donor funded irrigation and settlement schemes, which due to their uneven distribution of benefits induced major social and political changes. More particular, for instance, ‘colonization projects’ resettled tens of thousands of landless peasants, mostly Sinhalese, from the overpopulated south and west of the country in the hinterland – the “Dry Zone” of the Tamil-inhabited areas in the north and east.

It has been generally argued that these settlement projects created grievances and a suspicion among Tamil citizens against the Sri Lankan state. The Tamil political elite, for instance, argued that the benefits of these schemes were distributed unfairly. They perceived these plans to open up large
areas of the north and east of the country to Sinhala farmers as a direct threat to Tamil’s majority status in these provinces. On the other side, supporters of the irrigation and settlement projects argue that beneficiaries were chosen according to their need for land, not their ethnicity, that the schemes had no significant discriminatory effects and that they were predominantly located in the less densely populated interior areas of the east, which are sites of historical Sinhala settlement.

As Peebles has argued, “the transformation of the Dry Zone from a sparsely populated and unhealthy but ethnically diverse region to a rapidly growing and almost exclusively Sinhalese and Buddhist one. Tamil protests against this transformation seem to have been followed by intensification rather than moderation” (Peebles, 1990).

**Conclusion**

It has been shown that the Sri Lankan devolution initiative was a superimposition of the structures of devolution on the existing institutional arrangements for the centralized exercise of state powers. Hence, the realities of the powerful tend to dominate. Illustrative for this argument is the human outcome of the multiplicity of international donor funded projects. Though these interventions were set out to induce social development objectives, it has been argued that it contributed to greater social segregation.

In this, the ideologies in terms of state-directed planning seem to have constrained the possibilities for solving local conflicts of interest and to stimulate and coordinate between national policy and local development objectives. Consequently, it can be argued that the outcome of devolution in the ethniticized and segregated society of Sri Lankan can only lead towards a fragmented governmental system of municipalities and provinces, each of which their own focus on its own areas and domains as closed shops (Salet et al., 2003).

This case has shown that legitimacy and meaning in development are socially produced and based on the way in which actors experience life in movement. That is, as argued in chapter one, legitimacy in development it is conceived as a learning process which can adjust perspectives and generate meaning (Faludi, 2000) before taking action. This seems to raise the validity of a notion of planning as involved with the design of indicative plans for inducing the process in which meaningful knowledge is build. As stated in chapter two, the planning process could be involved with the production of frames of reference through collaboration. This might provide internal actors with an opportunity to determine which issues they find important and bring these into policy attention. Simultaneously, it can provide governing powers a wealth of information to solve relational conflicts of interest, while it might induce the social base and ‘institutional thickness’ to do something about it.
Illustration – Relational complexity and human outcome

In this narrative illustration, I will reflect on this particular post-tsunami resettlement project, conducted through a bilateral partnership between the Sri Lankan and the Italian Government, complemented by an international non-governmental organization (NGO). In 2006, an entire Hindu community has been resettled in Kallampathai, a so called Grama Nilahari (GN) which is the lowest level of administrative government in the country (see Annex 1). Kallampathai GN in the North-Eastern coastal region of Sri Lanka. Kallampathai is a rural village which had been abandoned due to the armed conflict. In 1965 there were approximately 250 families living in Kallampathai, but due to the conflict the entire village community was displaced and most of them had to flee to neighbouring India. After a ceasefire agreement in 2002 some of them decided to return to their native country but ended up in a refugee camp which was swept away during the 2004 tsunami.

The resettlement initiative was initiated by an Italian based iNGO and entirely funded by the Italian Government. The other governing actors involved included the Division level government agent (see Annex 1), the involved Hindu Community as being the beneficiaries, and the Division Level Catholic institutional body functioning as mediator between all stakeholders and authorities. In April 2006, 86 houses and a drainage system including wells and water pumps were finished. In addition, sewing machines had been distributed with the intention to provide a asset base for livelihood development. To enable home-garden cultivation as an alternative to increase the household food supply, the dwellings have been placed on plots of land of a suitable size. Every house includes a veranda, two bedrooms, a living room, a toilet, and a kitchen with a fireplace. After eight months the project was finished. This milestone was celebrated with an opening ceremony during which the keys of the houses were handed over to the future inhabitants.
In 2007, less than a year after completion of the village, the community of Kallampathai was forced to abandon the village due to resurrection of the civil war. Meanwhile, the implementing international agency withdrew from the negation table after being confronted with several extortion attempts of rebel groups, an integrated part of daily life. As a consequence, Kallampathai has been ‘redeveloped’ into a military camp in which the houses function as storage for ammunition while the villagers have regained their status of Internally Displaced Person (IDP). Consequently, it seems relevant to question if collective action ultimately serves collective interest, and how planning could contribute to legitimacy in development. A more practical question which have been posed by local ‘beneficiaries’ during research in Sri Lanka has been: “what’s the purpose?”. Moreover, as argued in this paper, answering this question through cognitive processes of mutual learning, while building a powerful focus for action seems to be the challenging task for planning development in relational complex networks.
Appendix


Annex 1 - Operability of the Sri Lankan Government system

**Central Government**

- **Executive Power**
  - President: elected - 6 year term
  - Appoints justices

- **Judiciary Power**
  - Supreme Court: appointed
  - Judicial review

- **Legislative Power**
  - Parliament: elected - 5 year term
  - Appoints ministers

**Provincial Government**

- **Executive Power**
  - Governor: Power to dissolve the Provincial Council, Representative of central government
  - mayor / Chairman: Nominated by political parties

- **Legislative Power**
  - Provincial Council: elected - 5 year term
  - Provincial policy framework
  - Direction for shaping action

**Local Government**

- **Executive Power**
  - Appointed Government Officials

- **Popular Elected Institutions**
  - Municipal Council (MC)
  - Urban Council (UC)
  - Pradeshi Sabha (PS)
  - Community Based Organizations (CBO)

- **Civil Service**
  - Provincial Secretariat
  - District Secretariat
  - Grama Niladhari
  - Government Agent
  - Divisional Secretary
  - Village Officer