Article:

De Jong, Sara orcid.org/0000-0002-5132-2777, Berenschot, Ward, Ehrhardt, David et al. (1 more author) (2023) Agents of order?:Brokerage and empowerment in development and conflict. Journal of International Development. pp. 385-400. ISSN 0954-1748

https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3759

Agents of Order?
Brokerage and Empowerment in Development and Conflict

Edited by
Sara de Jong, University of York, sara.dejong@york.ac.uk
Ward Berenschot, University of Amsterdam and KITLV, berenschot@kitlv.nl
David Ehrhardt, Leiden University, d.w.l.ehrhardt@luc.leidenuniv.nl
Oliver Walton, University of Bath, o.e.walton@bath.ac.uk

Abstract

To what extent do brokers empower marginalised communities? This pertinent question connects the articles collected in this special issue and is the focus of this introduction. We propose that a comparative analysis of the empowering capacity of brokers involves paying attention to three key dimensions of brokerage, as well as their interaction effects: the characteristics of the broker, the nature of the brokerage network in which the broker operates, and the structural conditions that give rise to a (fluctuating) demand for brokers. We highlight and analyse variation in the degree to which brokers succeed in empowering marginalised communities, while noting that brokerage often functions as a force for order rather than transformation. We conclude that under certain circumstances, brokers can significantly empower communities, but that this impact is curtailed by the systemic constraints inherent in their social context.

Introduction

Over the last two decades, development studies research has shown a renewed interest in the role of brokers (Lewis & Mosse 2006; Bierschenk et al. 2002; Fechter & Schwittay 2019). The importance of these brokers is observed for a range of development challenges, including political decentralisation and democratisation (Anwar 2014; Wood 2003), managing growing social and cultural diversity (Bilecen and Faist 2015; Crafter et al. 2015; de Jong 2016; Koster and van Leynseele 2018), access to public services (Berenschot et al. 2018; Jeffrey et al 2011), the resolution of (violent) conflict (Raeymakers et al. 2008; Goodhand, Klem, & Walton 2016; Volkov 2002), facilitating and transforming global supply chains (Reinecke et al. 2018), playing key roles in the political economy of migration (Alpes 2017), as well as in research and knowledge production (see Eriksson Baaz & Utas 2019; Sukarieh & Tannock 2019).

One of the most pertinent questions arising from this literature is the impact they have on the position of the people and organisations for whom they act as agents. Especially in situations of inequality and power hierarchies, brokers often connect relatively marginalised communities with those in power – be it the state, private enterprises, or international organisations. But do they actually benefit the position of the marginalised? Or do they rather, as Meehan and Plonski (2017, 43) suggest, serve to entrench their disempowerment? This special issue addresses this question by looking at a range of different contexts in which brokers connect relatively marginal constituents with more powerful actors and exploring the dynamics of (dis)empowerment. We highlight and analyse variation in the degree to which brokers succeed in empowering marginalised communities, while noting that brokerage often functions as a force for order rather than transformation. We conclude that under certain circumstances - particularly in the context of fragmented brokerage networks and strong ties between well-connected brokers and their clients - brokers can significantly empower communities; but that this impact is curtailed by the systemic constraints inherent in their social context. Longer-term transformative change for the benefit of the marginalised is therefore far from assured.

We define brokers as intermediaries who bridge gaps in social structures by facilitating a two-directional flow of goods, information, opportunities and knowledge across those gaps (Stovel, Gollub, and Meyersson Milgrom 2011: 1). This definition highlights two important aspects of our understanding of brokerage. First, it is inherently dynamic and temporary in nature, filling gaps in social structures by connecting previously unconnected spheres of a social system. The moment brokers become permanent nodes in a system, they cease being brokers and instead become other forms of permanent institutions. Second, the two-directional flow that brokers facilitate underlines that they act as agents of two principals simultaneously, who often represent diverging (or even competing) interests. Moreover, the relationship between the two social groups between which brokers mediate tends to be marked by power inequalities, which places brokers in an even more "liminal" position with fragile relations of trust, loyalty and dependency (Hinderaker 2002, 359). This inherently 'Janus-faced' position has been remarked upon repeatedly in relation to brokers (Hinderaker 2002; Aspinall 2014; Kern and Müller-Böker 2015; Ehrhardt 2016; de Jong 2018), not least because it helps to explain the precariousness that often characterises their position but also because it raises the question of who benefits from their brokerage.

In this special issue, we are most concerned with the impact of brokerage on the *empowerment* of marginalised communities: that is, their position of power relative to other actors in their social system (e.g. Rowland, 1995). Given the difficulties involved in defining power, we take a broad view to what empowerment might involve, derived from Eyben's (2011) formulation: the process of increasing one's ability to control one's life. This may comprise anything from increased awareness and understanding of political norms and regulations to use them to your advantage, to increased inclusion in formal or informal decision-making fora, or even fundamental institutional reform (cf. Calvès 2009; Hill 2011; Kaminski et al. 2000). The breadth of this definition is useful because it allows the papers in the special issue to freely explore the different ways in which brokerage impacts on the power of marginal communities. This exploration highlights considerable diversity between cases, as is to be expected; but it also brings out four key patterns that the remainder of this introduction aims to highlight.

The articles in this special issue show, firstly, that brokers often provide substantial benefits for the communities they represent, but that they tend to do so working within, rather than against, the political and economic structures that cause the marginalisation of these communities. The empowerment that brokers offer, in other words, tends to involve increasing a community's capacity to extract relatively small benefits from dominant groups or institutions, without meaningfully eroding the causes of their domination. Within this general pattern, however, as we outline below, our studies show that even the capacity of brokers to provide such benefits varies greatly: in some cases, brokers fail to secure any meaningful benefits for those who could be considered their clients, while in other cases brokers succeed in providing a steady flow of state resources and other benefits to their clients.

Exploring this variation using the articles in this special issue as well as other available studies on brokers, we propose that a comparative analysis of the empowering capacity of brokers involves paying attention to three key dimensions of brokerage: the characteristics of the broker, the nature of the brokerage network in which the broker operates, and the structural conditions that give rise to a (fluctuating) demand for brokers. For each of these dimensions we will identify features, which, as our case studies suggest, strengthen the capacity of brokers to empower their communities. These are, of course, not the only dimensions and correspondent features and we welcome future research to develop this. However, we propose these as a useful starting point for comparative analysis of the potential for empowerment by brokers. After introducing current debates on brokerage and empowerment and outlining our approach, we will discuss each of these comparative dimensions in turn. We end by highlighting the relevance of a comparative understanding of brokerage for the study of development and empowerment.

Brokers and Empowerment

The study of brokers and brokerage has made a remarkable comeback. In the 1960s and 1970s brokers featured prominently in studies on political and economic development. In tune with the then prevalent focus on modernization processes, these studies highlighted the role of brokers in integrating previously isolated communities into expanding political and economic spheres (Bailey 1963, Wolf 1956, Boissevain 1974), thereby bridging gaps in social networks as well as mediating cultural differences (Geertz 1960). These studies paid considerable attention to the structural features of brokerage (e.g. Granovetter 1973, see also Gould and Fernandez 1989). By the 1980s however, interest in brokers waned as a post-structuralist turn in social sciences directed attention away from the close-up study of social structures and networks.

However, over the last decade or so, a 'return of the broker' (Lindquist 2015: 872) is taking place. Brokers now regularly feature in studies from a range of social science disciplines (see Bräuchler et al. 2021 for an overview). In political science, scholars pay extensive attention to the role of brokers in facilitating clientelistic exchanges of personal favours for electoral support (see for example Stokes et al. 2013, Aspinall et all 2022, Holland and Palmer-Rubin 2015) and, relatedly, in providing access to public services (e.g. Berenschot 2019, Reddy and Haragopal 1985). In sociology, brokers play a prominent role in the rapidly expanding, and diverse subfield of social network analysis (e.g. Bilecen and Faist 2015; Romanos 2016; Brass 2022). In economics and economic anthropology or sociology attention is growing for the important role of brokers in connecting buyers and sellers in complex or long-distance trade (see for example, Burt 1992; Beuving 2013, Sud 2014). In anthropology, brokers play an important role in ethnographic studies of, for example, migration (e.g. DeMaria Harney 2006, Alpes 2011) and everyday state-citizen interaction (e.g. Koster 2014) In development studies scholars regularly highlight the importance of brokers in shaping the implementation and impact of development projects and government programs (Bierschenk et al. 2002) as brokers 'translate' (the terms employed by) such interventions into local settings (Lewis and Mosse 2006, see also Merry 2006).

As a few recent overviews (Bräuchler 2021 et al.; Koster and Leynseele 2019, Lindquist 2015a) have remarked, a key theme running throughout this literature is the moral ambiguity of brokers. Brokers are described as untrustworthy as their self-presentation of selfless intermediary often masks the considerable personal gains that brokers derive from their capacity to provide social connections. Underlying this recurring emphasis on the selfishness of brokers, however, we can observe an apparent disagreement among scholars about whether brokers actually empower the individuals or communities they are supposed to serve (see Faist 2014). A first group of studies is sceptical of this empowering capacity of brokers. These studies emphasise that brokers are in it for themselves. Such observations go back to Georg Simmel's classic essay on 'the triad' in which he discussed the possibility of a mediating broker turning into a '*tertius gaudens'* or 'laughing third' who "make[s] the interaction that takes place between the parties and between himself and them, a means for his own purposes" (Simmel 1950: 154). As Boissevain (1974: 158 and 146) formulates in his classic study *Friends of Friends,* 'brokerage is business' and a broker is a 'professional manipulator of people and information who brings about communication for profit'. In this view, pragmatic brokers often end up betraying their clients (and their patrons) when this is profitable (see also Aspinall 2014).

A second group argues that brokers often end up sustaining social inequalities, as they prevent rather than support the empowerment of the marginalised communities depending on them (e.g. Meehan and Plonski 2017, Berenschot 2011)). These studies suggest that the dependence on brokers tends to be 'penny-wise and pound-foolish' (e.g. Berenschot 2019: 2): while brokers might help marginalised communities in extracting some personal benefits from an otherwise hostile or inaccessible system, they do so in return for votes or other forms of support for patrons distributing these benefits and, perhaps more importantly, the prevent a more rights-based collective action focused on changing laws and regulations. In other words, the exchange relationships facilitated by brokers tend to discourage and, hence, prevent marginalised groups from challenging the structural conditions underlying their marginalisation.

Yet, a third group of studies disagrees with these negative assessments of brokers. A number of recent studies argue that, in the context of irresponsive institutions and stark social inequalities, the presence of skilled and active brokers is a vital community resource (e.g. Kern & Müller-Böker 2015). Brokers are, in this interpretation, of key importance for the empowering of marginalised communities because they provide effective, piece-meal solutions for dealing with this marginalisation. In contexts of considerable social inequality and unresponsive institutions, the kind of rights-based collective action (implicitly) preferred by those weary of brokers, might simply be less effective for helping marginalised communities (see De Wit and Berner 2009) compared to the negotiated interactions offered by brokers (see also Auerbach 2019, Bussell 2019). As the 'politics of the governed' unavoidably involves messy negotiated state-citizen interaction (Chatterjee 2004), effective empowerment will come from brokers capable of improving such negotiated interactions with powerholders.

Is such empowerment-by-brokers indeed feasible, and if so, under what conditions? A remarkable feature of this literature is that, so far, such arguments about the positive or negative impact of brokerage are made in general terms, as if the impact of brokers is always positive (or negative). Such lack of nuance perhaps stems from the fact that little comparative analysis of brokers and brokerage has been undertaken. Given the considerable time and efforts needed to penetrate the practices and networks of brokers, most studies involve a single context or region. And in the few instances when different studies are brought together (e.g. Bräuchler et al. 2021, Koster and Leynseele 2019), the analysis focuses on extracting and analysing general features of brokerage rather than analysing variation.

With this special issue we bring together different studies on brokers and brokerage to foster such a comparative analysis of the empowering capacity of brokers. By comparing analyses of brokers in different contexts, we aim to identify whether and under what circumstances brokers are most likely to empower the communities they represent. As mentioned, we use the term empowerment in the sense of increasing one's ability to control one's life. Hence our comparative analysis of the capacity of brokers to empower their clients, concerns the varying capacity of brokers to increase the control that individuals or communities exert over the conditions shaping their lives. Given this interest in empowerment, both this introductory essay and the articles in this special issue focus particularly on the capacity of brokers to support marginalised communities. We acknowledge that brokers can also help rich and powerful clients, but because of our interests in empowerment, our focus is on the capacity of brokers to help marginalised communities as these are groups with the least control over the conditions shaping their lives.

To engage in such an analysis, we are employing the classic terminology used to describe the three types of actors in the 'triad' involved in brokerage: the client, the broker and the patron. As mentioned earlier, brokers are intermediaries who bridge social gaps by facilitating both the communication and the flow of resources between different social actors. They facilitate this flow of resources between parties who differ in their degree of control over these resources. In this analytical scheme a patron is an individual who controls (the distribution of) resources that clients desire. This control distinguishes a broker from a patron: in the terms proposed by Jeremy Boissevain (1974, 147-148), brokers are "entrepreneurs" who, in contrast to patrons, do not own "first order resources", such as land or knowledge. Instead, brokers control certain "second order resources", defined as the "strategic contacts with other people who control [first order resources] directly or who have access to such persons". In this terminology clients are individuals or communities who lack both direct access to such 'first order resources' as well as access to individuals controlling such resources - which makes clients turn to brokers to mediate such connections. That does not mean that clients are entirely powerless: often, clients can offer various resources - such as various kinds of services, support, information or votes - in return for the support of a patron. For this reason, brokers tend to facilitate a two-directional flow of resources: while helping clients to access resources that a patron controls, brokers also enable a patron to ensure that clients reciprocate this favour with various forms of support.

While we feel that these generic terms - broker, patron, client - remain useful analytical tools to analyse and compare the character of brokerage, they do come with a number of unhelpful associations which we would like to dispel before moving on. First, while clients lack access to important resources, this should not be taken to imply that they are powerless or lack agency. In fact, an important dimension of our comparative analysis involves paying attention to the degree to which clients have leverage over both their brokers and patrons. In some contexts, clients can hardly avoid being drawn into highly dependent and unequal relationships, while in other contexts clients can maximise their access to resources by making strategic and pragmatic choices about whether and how to engage a broker and which broker to select. Secondly and relatedly, in classic literature the terms 'client' and 'patron' are often used to describe exploitative and highly unequal relationships (Lemarchand 1981, Scott 1969). Yet as more recent studies tend to emphasise (e.g. Bussel 2019, Jakimow 2018), clients can sometimes have the upper hand in such relationships, particularly when patrons are also dependent on the resources that clients provide. Our aim here is to capture and analyse (the causes of) such variation in the degree to which the relationship between clients, brokers and patrons are unequal and exploitative.

Taken together, the articles in this special issue present a nuanced picture of brokers' capacity for empowerment. On the one hand, virtually all brokers in this special issue provide benefits for the marginal communities they represent. They may do so, for example, by facilitating the formation of collective identities and organisations that can be used for claim making and advocacy (e.g. Diprose 2022); by enhancing access to services and resources of the state (e.g. Walton and Goodhand 2022a; Ehrhardt 2022); or by protecting a community from (violent) encroachment from other actors (e.g. Pope 2022). But on the other hand, all papers in this special issue emphasise the fundamental limitations to these forms of empowerment: rarely, if ever, do brokers help marginalised communities to disrupt the structural institutions and inequalities that constrain their position. This leads us to suggest that, in most cases, brokers are agents of order: they empower marginal communities to the point where it stabilises social systems; but no further.

This pattern is particularly important because all the papers in this special issue describe brokerage in the context of political systems with high degrees of informality, in which access to (state) resources and services is generally mediated by personal relationships. As Meehan and Plonski (2017) suggest, the empowering impact of brokers – to allow marginalised communities to 'speak to power' – would be particularly welcome in such contexts. Yet, with the exception of some of the CSOs in Diprose's (2022) article, our papers present limited evidence that brokers are able to break through clientelist structures. In this sense these articles provide support for the above-mentioned group of studies that doubt the transformative capacity of brokers.

While we find little indication that brokers can bring about sweeping structural change, we do find that brokers often succeed in securing important benefits for their clients. Brokers can sometimes help the marginalised navigate existing structures more effectively, expand patronage networks to include them, and affect the distribution of (state) resources in beneficial ways. In other words, despite the limited structural, long-term impact of brokerage on the empowerment of the marginalised, the papers in this special issue highlight considerable variation in the degree to which brokers benefit and empower their communities. In the remainder of this essay, we analyse this variation. Based on a comparative reading of the articles in this special issue (as well as other studies on brokerage) we inductively identified three key dimensions in which specific factors, we argue, impact the likelihood that brokers end up empowering their clients. Within the first dimension, the character of the broker, we suggest that a broker's social ties and identity impact the potential for empowerment. For the second dimension, the brokerage network in which the broker is embedded, we suggest that empowerment is shaped by the degree of fragmentation or monopolisation of the network. Finally, within the third dimension, the structural conditions under which the broker operates, we propose that the potential for empowerment e is shaped by degrees of volatility and change. We will discuss each of these three comparative dimensions and the key factors shaping empowerment in turn.

The Characteristics of the Broker: identity, social ties, and accountability

In this section, we seek to unpack the - perhaps intuitive - idea that the 'who' of the broker affects the degree to which they can empower marginalised communities. In other words, the characteristics of the broker, both in terms of their identity and social ties, matter. We depart from the assumption that two main risks threaten the empowerment of clients. First, the broker may prioritise their own self-interest over the interests of their clients. Secondly, the broker, despite their best efforts, may not be capable or effective enough in facilitating the transfer of resources between the marginalised and dominant group.

In order to develop this idea, it is helpful to draw on Meehan and Plonski's categorisation of brokers' positionality (2017) which maps their power and authority along a spectrum of three positions. The first type, 'embedded brokers' have close ties with and influence over - whether through voluntary or coercive means - the marginal community, which seeks empowerment. The second type of broker obtains their authority primarily from their links to the hegemonic party and is thus on the opposite side of the spectrum in relation to the embedded broker. For ease, we will here employ the term 'co-opted broker' to refer to this second type. The third type of broker is the liaison or middleman, whose ability to act as a broker is characterised by "the fact that they are neither clearly embedded in the margins nor closely aligned with external forces" (2017: 39-40).

Each of these broker types have distinct opportunities and challenges, depending on their position vis-a-vis the patron and the client. The first type, 'embedded brokers', face the challenge of gaining influence - or leverage - over the hegemonic party. At the same time, their strong ties to the marginalised community limit their desire and ability to betray the community for their own gain and allow them to have good information and influence within the community. Embedded brokers are also more likely to be the result of a degree of control over their selection by the client community, which fosters "outcomes of brokerage [that] better reflected their interests" (Severs and de Jong 2018: 346), as can be seen in the study of diaspora brokers in Nigeria by Ehrhardt (2022). We will discuss this effect of whether clients can avail of multiple brokers in more detail in the next section.

In contrast, the second type of broker is much more likely to be able to accrue personal advantage from their position due to the fact that their authority is derived from the powerful party; moreover, their connections to the patron allow these brokers access and influence of them. Yet at the same time, co-opted brokers may face difficulties in connecting to, and empowering, the marginalised community, because in their case their room for manoeuvre is likely to be constrained by the patron and they lack good connections and information in the marginalised community. Finally, the third type of broker, the liaison, does not have the benefits derived from connections to either patron or client; but their autonomous position incentivises them to seek 'deals' that interest both client and patron, and it allows them to seek their own advantage over empowering the marginalised client community or benefiting their patron.

While we do not seek to equate brokers' characteristics (the "who" of the broker) and positionality (vis-a-vis the client and patron) as discussed by Meehan and Plonski (2017), we do suggest that there is a likely relationship between the two, as we are developing below. We also argue that when it comes to the impact of the characteristics of the broker on the potential for empowerment of marginalised groups, we can distinguish identity from social ties, recognising that while these might be connected, they are not necessarily so. If a broker's ethnic and religious identity is similar to that of that of the marginalised group, their shared identity is likely to mean that the broker has a heightened awareness of the needs of the client and has some aligned interests in that the collective empowerment of the client would also benefit the broker (i.e. they have 'skin in the game'). However, their shared identity means they also likely share the precarious relationship to centres of power and hence may lack effectiveness. Moreover, the broker may still pursue individual interests that are counter to the interests of the group with which it shares an identity, if these individual benefits are more attractive and/or more viable. Where there are strong social ties between the broker and the clients, the broker is more likely to be held accountable (and less likely to 'defect' to pursue their individual interests).

This resonates with broader discussions in political science about the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. These studies seek to analyse when and to what extent the increased representation of politicians who share their identity with minoritised groups in political arenas, such as parliaments, leads to better overall outcomes for marginalised communities. Building on the realisation that not all female or ethnic minority politicians who descriptively represent marginalised groups actually further these groups' interest through substantive representation, Dovi (2002) has suggested that "preferable descriptive representatives" (similar to brokers most likely to empower their clients) are characterised by two features. First, they share lived experiences of subordination and they have strong mutual relationships with dispossessed subgroups.

This leads to a complex picture: the 'ideal' characteristics of an empowering broker would be to have a shared identity with the clients and strong social ties with them, and simultaneously in a position to be effective vis-a-vis the patron. Some of Rachael Diprose's (2023) Indonesian CSOs seem to approximate this ideal, with strong community ties and ideological alignment but also leverage over the local patrons. However, the other cases highlight the tradeoff that often exists between ties to the community and leverage over the patron. As David Ehrhardt demonstrates, diaspora chiefs brokering on behalf of migrant communities in Nigeria tend to be selected for "being a leading example of their ethnic minority's customs and values" and those who come from strong organisational structures, such as hometown associations and ethnic associations, tend to be stronger diaspora chiefs (2022: 15). However, the emphasis on their ethnic minority status, also means that they are never "equal partners to the state", as their effective power is limited and based on compliance with existing dominant structures (Ibid.). An even more extreme example of brokers' constrained space of manoeuvre are Afghan interpreters who were employed by Western armies. In contrast to the diaspora brokers studied by Ehrhardt (2022), Afghan interpreters were not selected as representatives by the local Afghan client community but by the 'patron', i.e. the powerful Western militaries. Local interpreters' shared identity with marginalised locals puts them in an almost equally weak position and with limited capacity to empower their communities.

As Goodhand and Walton's article demonstrates in this special issue, it may therefore be more effective if the broker shares social ties with the client, but also has a minority identity. In their account of frontier brokers in Sri Lanka, they present a broker from a Muslim minority. His Muslim identity, both "insulating him from the vicissitudes of caste-based Hambantota politics" (2022a: 10) and helping "him develop the trust of more powerful Sinhalese politicians and officials" may suggest he occupied the position of a liaison broker. However, the fact that he was known as "someone who looked after his community" and as a Tsunami victim shared his lived experiences with the local community, demonstrated his social ties with the wider community of Hambantota town, including those from his own Muslim community and those from the majority Sinhalese community (2022a: 12). As his power and authority largely depended on one powerful patron, over time, however, his position shifted across the spectrum from the first to the second type of broker. His efforts to deliver for his patron and his dependency on this one hegemonic actor, increasingly alienated him from the marginalised community in which he had grown up. A similar process of progressive alienation can be found in the study by Nicholas Pope of militias in Rio de Janeiro. While these militias initially had strong social ties with the client community and were "compelled by motivations to protect their communities, friends, and family" (2022: 6), over time, the benefits gained by the milícias meant that they became a force in themselves without accountability and "able to extend power beyond their immediate community boundaries" (2022: 11).

Mathews' study of African trading brokers in China similarly provides useful insights in the potential and limiting factors for empowerment of clients. While the African traders superficially share an 'African identity' with their clients, because they reside in China on a long-term basis and trade across the region, they do not have any strong ties with their African customers. They also lack strong links with their Chinese suppliers. This allows them to primarily pursue their own - in this case financial - interests. Only where the interests of these brokers coincidentally align with the clients, can we observe some limited form of 'empowerment', but this is not dependent on the shared identity or ties with the broker.

An interesting case study of the third type of broker, the liaison, can be found in the article by Berenschot, Dhiaulhaq and Deviana (2022), which discusses the brokering role of international NGOs, which support rural communities in Indonesia in their conflict with palm oil companies. These international NGOs have neither social ties or a shared identity with the client group, nor with the patron, but it is in fact this independence that makes them moderately effective in empowering clients. Unlike the second type of broker, their authority or room for manoeuvre is not dependent on the patron. The risk that they prioritise their own interest over the interests of the rural community is minimal in that their relatively powerful position means they have little to gain. This is in contrast to some of the local NGOs — "sometimes referred to with the derogatory term *bodrex NGOs* (Bodrex being an all-purpose medicine)— [which] make money by posing as community representatives in order to solicit bribes from palm oil companies" (2022: 7).

Finally, a more successful example of empowerment can be found in the example presented by Marabello (2022) of the organisational broker *Africoop,* a codevelopment project involving Ghanaian migrant leaders in Italy. *Africoop* was successful in "speaking out for migrants' rights and creating opportunities for social mobility" (p. 9). On the one hand, this could be explained by their strong social ties with the diaspora community, and the fact that their own interests largely aligned with that of the client community. On the other hand, they managed to avoid the pitfall of the well-intentioned but ultimately powerless broker, because of the favourable political climate which created a high demand for brokers like them. We will discuss these and other conditions in more detail below.

For now, we can summarise that the characteristics of the broker affect client' empowerment in two ways that tend to pull in opposite directions. On the one hand, a shared social identity with the client community helps align the interests of brokers and clients and strong social ties between broker and client foster accountability. On the other hand, shared traits with client communities mean that the broker also likely shares a precarious power base, which limits the potential for empowerment. Conversely, middlemen positions and non-existent or progressively loosening social ties allow brokers to merely pursue their own self-interest, which means client' empowerment is likely to only arise when client' benefits happens to align with brokers' interests or when third-party brokers altruistic position discourages them from pursuing self-interested objectives. From the above discussion, it has become obvious that social ties can develop and change over time, and we will return to the volatility of broker relationships later in this editorial.

Brokerage networks: fragmentation and monopolisation

Our second comparative dimension of broker accountability concerns the nature of brokerage networks. Brokerage networks vary greatly in terms of their degree of fragmentation, i.e the degree to which communities avail of multiple, competing brokers providing access to multiple patrons. On the one end of this scale are highly monopolised brokerage networks. These are networks shaped by highly centralised control over (state) resources and a limited number of brokers. Such networks make communities very dependent on a broker, whose capacity to help this community depends heavily on the goodwill and support of a single patron. An example of a non-fragmented, 'monopolised' brokerage network is when a community depends on one traditional leader to represent its community to the outside world, particularly when this leader depends on a single patron for access to resources. On the other end of this spectrum are highly fragmented brokerage networks, characterised not only by the availability of multiple, competing patrons offering alternative channels to access resources, but also by the presence of a large number of effective brokers. Such fragmentation occurs when, for example, slum dwellers can take their problems to various representatives of different, competing political parties. Another example of a fragmented brokerage network is the presence of multiple civil society organisations offering access to a wide range of potential supporters.

An analysis of the degree of fragmentation of brokerage networks is important to assess the capacity of brokers to actually empower their clients. The capacity of brokers to empower their clients depends partly, we propose, on whether these clients avail of multiple brokers brokering connections to multiple patrons. We propose, in other words, that the fragmentation of brokerage networks constitutes a form of 'informal democratisation' in the sense that such fragmentation strengthens the capacity of clients to extract benefits from brokerage networks (see also Berenschot 2019). The fragmentation of brokerage networks is empowering because it strengthens the bargaining power of clients vis-a-vis brokers and the bargaining power of these brokers vis-a-vis patrons. We will discuss the impact of fragmentation on both these relationships in turn.

First, the impact of fragmentation of brokerage networks on client -broker interactions. When there is only a single broker brokering access to desired resources, the balance of power is skewed in favour of the broker: in such a situation the broker can abuse this monopoly by withholding access to these resources. For example, studies from urban Argentina have highlighted how the monopolisation of brokerage networks can generate 'perverse accountability' (see Stokes 2005): in neighbourhoods where one party dominates, party-affiliated brokers threaten inhabitants with cutting off their access to state benefits, thus forcing them to remain loyal to the party (see also Auyero 2001).

When, on the contrary, clients avail of multiple, competing brokers who could potentially also provide access to desired resources, the balance of power shifts in favour of the client. Now brokers can no longer credibly threaten to withhold access to resources, and brokers face stronger incentives to perform: in the context of competing broker networks clients might shift their loyalty to another broker if this broker is deemed more effective. The gradual fragmentation of brokerage networks thus enables clients to pressurise brokers. One can see glimpses of these mechanisms in studies of brokers in more competitive settings. For example, in his study on public service provision in urban slums in India, Auerbach found that neighbourhoods with more, diverse sets of brokers are generally more successful in receiving government funds to improve public services (Auerbach 2019). His conclusion is that brokers are likely to be most active when the territorial control of a brokerage network is contested, i.e. when in a particular slum or neighbourhood competition has developed between multiple brokers attached to multiple patrons. Other studies on Indian politics also found that the considerable local political competition forces party workers to remain very attentive to the wishes and demands of inhabitants, in order to prevent losing potential supporters to a more active broker from a rival party (see for example also Edelman and Misra 2006, Bussell 2019 and Berenschot 2011, 2015). These studies describe contexts where the presence of multiple, competing political parties provides clients with a choice between multiple brokers, and where, consequently, brokers spend considerable time and effort trying to get things done for their clients.

The studies in this special issue provide several other illustrations of this impact of fragmented broker networks on client-broker interaction. Some authors discuss situations with little such fragmentation. In his study of 'coercive brokerage' of militias in Rio de Janeiro, Nick Pope discusses a situation where particular militias have more or less monopolised the connections of particular neighbourhoods with outside authorities. This made inhabitants very dependent on these militias, forcing them to accept their violent and coercive behaviour. Berenschot and Dhiaulhaq also discuss a case where communities suffer from the lack of alternative brokers: in their analysis of the role of NGOs in helping communities resolve land conflicts, they show not only that communities are very reliant on the limited number of NGOs providing support, but also that many NGO's exploit this dependency by double-crossing these communities as they strike a deal with companies.

In contrast, other articles in this special issue provide examples of the benefits of competition between multiple brokers. Ehrhardt shows that, as citizens avail of various alternative channels, new 'diaspora chiefs' in Nigeria try to carve out a position for themselves by being very responsive to demands and requests from their community. In their article on post-war Sri Lanka, Goodhand and Walton (2022a) also describe a setting where competition between brokers is relatively fierce, stimulating brokers with political ambitions to be relatively pro-active in brokering access to aid and government support. Goodhand and Walton's paper also illustrates that such fragmentation might be temporary, as the brokers that they followed lost their effectiveness and, consequently, their local influence when their political patron was politically ostracised. Mathews' study of African trading brokers in China shows how their African clients became empowered when a new 'type' of broker entered the scene that competed with the more old-school physical go-betweens, namely the Internet. Ironically, by brokering the opening of smart phone markets to their African customers, they have given themselves new, though non-human, competition, in the form of the internet.

Second, the fragmentation of brokerage networks also impacts broker-patron interaction. When access to resources is centralised in the hands of a single patron (in the context of, for example, a monopolised market or weak political competition), the bargaining power of brokers vis-a-vis this patron is severely constrained. In such contexts patrons simply face less incentives to act on the requests conveyed by brokers as their status and power is less dependent on their responsiveness to such requests. Such relationships can be observed in studies of brokerage in the context of dominant parties (see for example Yilderim 2020 and Denissen 2020): these studies describe brokers who are not only forced to tie themselves closely to the ruling party, but who also work for hard for the party, with very meagre returns. When, conversely, multiple patrons offer brokers multiple channels to access resources, the broker-patron relationship can take the form of a looser, more negotiated relationship. In such contexts brokers can extract various promises before committing themselves to a particular patron. And when subsequently this patron does not live up to these promises, brokers can decide to switch their allegiance to another patron. Aspinall's study (2014) of broker betrayal in Indonesia illustrates this pattern well: as different politicians vie for the support of a limited number of brokers, these politicians often end up providing these brokers with a lot of money without knowing whether brokers will use this money to mobilize support[1].

In this special issue De Jong's (2022) study of Afghan interpreters employed by Western armies provides a particularly apt illustration of how fragmentation shapes broker-patron relationships. She describes how this relationship shifted: when in the early days the western army was highly dependent on a limited number of interpreters, they were treated relatively well and their requests were taken seriously. These interpreters, however, became closely associated with, and thus highly dependent on western armies, while these armies gradually built up a much wider reserve pool of interpreters. These conditions set the stage for the western betrayal of these interpreters. Another good yet contrasting illustration of the impact of fragmentation can be found in Pope's (2022) study of Brazil's urban militia's. The situation he describes is the mirror image of the situation faced by De Jong's Afghan interpreters: as multiple patrons are vying for the support of (per neighbourhood) a single militia, this strong bargaining position enables militias to extract valuable support (such as keeping the police at bay) from these elites. And as, as mentioned above, they face little competition from alternative brokers, the stage is set for a form of 'coercive brokerage' that mainly serves the interests of these militias well rather than those of their communities Marabello's (2022) study of a Ghanaian migrant organisation in Italy provides another example of how a relatively strong bargaining position of a 'development broker' relates to the character of broader brokerage networks. As *Africoop* could provide authorities with a relatively rare channel to connect with Ghanaian migrants, this association could become relatively successful in obtaining both useful contacts as well as business opportunities.

In short, we conclude that brokerage is most empowering when taking place in the context of fragmented networks involving competition between multiple brokers as well as multiple patrons. This conclusion invokes a follow-up question: are there certain structural conditions that might influence whether more empowering forms of brokerage emerge? To this question we turn next.

Structural conditions: volatility and change

Having set out how the representativeness and fragmentation in broker networks affect the capacity for brokers to empower their communities, we now turn to the third aspect of our framework - the wider structural conditions which influence the potential for empowering forms of brokerage to emerge. We argue that the potential for broker empowerment is strongly shaped by both sudden and long-term processes of structural change. We also highlight how the dynamics of broker empowerment may have particular characteristics in unstable political contexts, or in situations of violent conflict.

Empowering forms of brokerage rely on two baseline conditions: first, the existence of political, economic or cultural resources, which brokers can draw on to empower marginalised

[1] Aspinall's study (2013) also illustrates the impact of (the lack of) fragmentation on client-broker interaction: as in this context the competition between brokers is limited due to a lack of local brokers, the brokers that Aspinall describes, seem to feel little compulsion to work for their community. They often end up keeping the money provided by politicians for themselves.

groups; and second a willingness on the part of a patron to engage with or share resources with brokers' constituencies. Beyond these baseline conditions, the papers in this special issue do not suggest that there are precise generalisable structural conditions that permit broker empowerment to flourish. This is attributable to two factors. First, it reflects the fundamentally tenuous and incomplete nature of brokerage: maintaining a brokerage role requires brokers to keep in tension competing forces and demands, which means that the key to enduring relevance as a broker involves addressing issues in an incomplete way, rather than fully resolving or transforming them. This pressure to maintain a balance between competing demands may partly reflect the self-interest of the broker - since they do not want to do themselves out of a job (Salovesh 1978) -, but also reflects pressures from other actors, particularly more powerful ones. As Pope (2022, 11) puts it, the central state had a threshold which it was not willing to let brokers exceed: "they stepped in as soon as the milícia became too bold and demanding power".

Second, the papers highlight how the potential for broker empowerment is rarely a fixed or stable condition, but rather is tightly linked to wider processes of structural change and moments of rupture (confirming findings from wider body of literature on political economy of brokerage (Blok 1974, Meehan & Plonski 2017). The papers in this special issue illustrate how broker empowerment is shaped by long-term structural changes including the expansion of markets, the evolution of state institutions or the emergence of new technologies. The papers also highlight the importance of more sudden moments of rupture such as natural disasters, pandemics, or the election of a new government, which tend to quickly open or close down opportunities for brokers to empower their communities. Since the scope for broker empowerment is closely bound up with processes of social, economic and political change, brokers' contributions are often heightened during periods of accelerated structural change but are also liable to be short-lived and fleeting. For this reason, we argue that an assessment of brokers' capacity to promote empowerment requires a longitudinal approach, which reflects both the short-term and long-term impacts of brokerage and which examines how brokers' contributions may change over time (Meehan and Plonski 2017). Assessing brokers' contributions in this way tends to confirm our broader argument that while brokers may provide short-lived benefits to their communities, in the longer run, they tend to reinforce rather than transform structural inequalities.

The papers in this special issue highlight a variety of ways in which structural change can open and close opportunities for broker empowerment. Mathews' (2022) paper illustrates how any benefits generated by African traders in China on behalf of consumers in Africa were gradually eroded by the expansion of smartphone use. Greater access to the internet enhanced consumers' ability to identify prices and undermined brokers' role (whilst inadvertently empowering the communities). As well as illustrating how gradual technological change can close down brokerage opportunities, Mathews' (2022) study also illustrates how more sudden shocks, such as the COVID pandemic, which made it more difficult for African traders to access Chinese goods, can have more immediate yet significant impacts on their work.

Pope's (2022) paper focuses on the coercive brokerage of militia groups operating in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, a context where the initial demand for brokerage comes from the government's lack of control and penetration in some parts of the city. The informal *milicia* provide a degree of local order amidst a fragmenting political settlement and an urban environment disrupted by clashing drug gangs and state forces. As the *milicia* grow more influential and seek to expand beyond the marginal parts of the city, however, they are subjected to a crackdown by central government elites. This case highlights how scope for brokerage in frontier-like settings closes when the central government expands their control into marginal areas.

As outlined above, a relatively high degree of competition amongst brokers can help to empower communities by diminishing scope for embedded brokers to prioritise their own self-interest and betray their communities. Such competition, however, may be less desirable in situations of violent conflict where broker competition may be associated with increased violence. While there is not a direct causal relationship between competitive brokerage and violence, high competition between brokers may reflect fractured networks, a situation that may make violence more likely. In contexts marked by sustained 'political unsettlement' (Bell & Pospisil 2017) we may find that scope for brokers to empower can be significant but short lived.

The dynamics examined in Pope's (2022) paper have parallels in frontier or borderland regions of countries affected by conflict (see Goodhand, Klem and Walton 2017; Goodhand and Walton 2022b). Goodhand and Walton's (2022a) paper for this special issue highlights how two key moments of rupture in Sri Lanka's recent history (the 2004 tsunami and the ending of the war in 2009) gave rise to two distinct constellations of actors, connections and forces (assemblages), which in turn shaped the dynamics of brokerage. Moments of rupture present significant opportunities for brokers to advance their interests and those of their communities, however, these periods are often fleeting and liable to break down following subsequent shifts in the political settlement. In both urban Rio and post-war Sri Lanka, the need for brokers stems from the inability of central government to connect fully with marginalised regions or populations, and in both cases the scope for brokers to maintain an enduring role in mediating between centre and periphery is closed down by the narrowing of space for frontier brokers as the central state seeks to consolidate its control over marginal spaces. These two papers suggest that in contexts where a ruling power is in the process of consolidating control (where a war-time frontier is being closed, or where central elites are seeking to consolidate power in marginal spaces), we may expect to see diminishing opportunities for brokers to empower their constituencies.

Goodhand and Walton's (2022a) paper on frontier brokerage in Sri Lanka and De Jong's (2022) paper on Afghan interpreters both highlight how sudden shifts in the political landscape can rapidly undermine the ability of co-opted brokers who are closely aligned with powerful patrons to maintain their previous brokerage role. De Jong's (2022) paper represents an extreme example of this dynamic where the patron (western armies) withdrew entirely from Afghanistan in August 2021, leaving many interpreters extremely vulnerable to retributive attacks from the Taliban.

Goodhand and Walton (2022a) and Pope (2022) highlight instances where the demand for brokerage comes primarily from the central state to secure control over marginalised or contested regions, or from marginalised communities themselves in their attempts to access resources (such as security or resources) controlled by more powerful actors (Meehan & Plonski 2017). The paper by Berenschot, Dhiaulhaq and Deviane (2022) examines another variant where the demand for brokerage emerges from communities' attempts to make themselves legible to the central state. By working with national and international NGOs to resolve land conflicts, rural communities in Indonesia seek to defend their rights to oil palm resources. The paper highlights significant dangers for the communities since NGOs brokering on communities' behalf may end up pursuing their own self-interest or with 'clientelist strings attached' (p.11).

This section has focused on how sudden shifts in political settlements, natural disasters, or pandemics can suddenly open or shut down opportunities for brokerage. We have also explored how demand for brokerage is shaped by longer-term processes of structural change, such as the expansion of smartphone use, or the gradual consolidation of government control in frontier regions. It is not surprising that brokers' roles are often strongly shaped by wider political change: as noted in the introduction, brokerage is an inherently dynamic process, which relies on the existence of gaps in the social and political system.

Moments of rupture represent periods when the potential for broker empowerment may be inflated. These moments can see a sudden inflow of resources or a situation where existing governance arrangements are in flux. Such situations provide scope for brokers to capture resources or to exploit new political arrangements to advance the position of their clients. Whether brokers avail of these opportunities for the purposes of empowerment is likely to depend on the characteristics of the broker discussed above. Embedded brokers who have strong accountability ties to their clients but who have lacked political avenues or access to resources are most likely to direct the opportunities presented by volatility towards the goal of empowerment. Brokers with weaker accountability ties are more likely to exploit such opportunities to capture resources for themselves or to advance their own position within the political system. But while some moments of rupture present greater opportunities for brokers, as the papers in this special issue show, others greatly curtail the potential for broker empowerment - brokers may quickly find themselves shut out of rapidly evolving political systems, or surplus to requirements due to the emergence of new technologies or a new set of economic actors. Brokers' capacity to play an enduring brokerage role relies on an ability to navigate such challenging situations. The most successful and long-standing brokers are those capable of maintaining a high degree of flexibility, and an ability to read and adapt to changing conditions (Goodhand & Walton 2022b).

Concluding Thoughts

To what extent do brokers empower marginalised communities? This key question is one of the threads connecting the articles collected in this special issue, and the focus of this introduction. Synthesising the articles in this special issue, we analysed in this introduction how and why the impacts of brokerage vary in different contexts, from the limited effect of interpreters for Western armies in the war in Afghanistan to the 'thick brokerage' of women's rights civil society organisations in Indonesia. Based on these cases and a broader range of case studies in existing literature we identified three sets of factors shaping the empowering capacity of brokers. First, the characteristics of the broker, specifically their social ties and identity; second, the fragmentation (or monopolisation) of brokerage networks in which the broker operates; and finally, the volatility or stability of the wider context in which brokerage takes place.

Each of these factors can be viewed to have independent effects on the incentives and capabilities of brokers. But they also have interesting interaction effects. For example, strong ties to a marginal community may weaken the efficacy of brokers to leverage patrons in relatively stable situations; but in situations of high volatility (and therefore high patron turnover), such connections may prove invaluable assets to brokers who want to sustain their position and livelihood. These interaction effects - between social ties, identities, network fragmentation, and volatility - are therefore a second line of further research outlined by the papers in this volume. We hope that these conclusions will be taken up in further, more systematically comparative studies on brokerage and empowerment.

Another question that is tantalisingly suggested by several of the articles in this issue is that of the longue-durée: Can brokers become focal points, or facilitators, of different - and more transformative - forms of collective action and interest representation? Or does their impact remain constrained by their ambiguous, Janus-faced position in between a client and a patron, who are structurally unequally situated? On the basis of our case studies, we concluded that brokers are likely to provide benefits to both the marginalised clients and powerful patrons they connect; but their macro-impact is often one of stabilising social systems rather than reorganising them. Brokers are agents beholden to two unequal and competing principals - and as such, their incentives are to find the elusive middle ground in between both sets of interests. This, generally, makes brokers agents of order rather than catalysts of change, able to improve the lives of marginal groups by improving access to resources or services - but only to the extent that the core interests of their patrons remain unchallenged. They are the proverbial glue that holds together complex political systems, especially in contexts characterised by widespread informality and change.

So, do brokers always operate as agents of order, or could more transformative forms of brokerage emerge in some contexts? Could brokers turn into agents of positive transformation rather than of order and stability, and radically improve the lot of the marginalised communities they represent even in the short run? Our three sets of explanatory factors point to contexts where such transformative brokerage is most likely. Yet a full appraisal of the transformatory capacity of brokerage requires more comparative research on cases where brokers did succeed in fostering social transformations, benefitting marginalised client communities. We hope that this editorial and the contributions to this special issue will stimulate others to pursue such a research agenda.

Bibliography

Alpes, Maybritt Jill. 2017. "Why aspiring migrants trust migration brokers: the moral economy of departure in Anglophone Cameroon." *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 87(2): 304-321.

Anwar, N. H. 2014. Urban transformations: Brokers, collaborative governance and community building in Karachi's periphery. *South Asian History and Culture*, *5*(1), 75–92.

Aspinall, E., Weiss, M. L., Hicken, A., & Hutchcroft, P. D. 2022. *Mobilizing for Elections: Patronage and Political Machines in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge University Press.

Aspinall, Edward. 2014. "When brokers betray: Clientelism, Social Networks, and Electoral Politics in Indonesia" *Critical Asian Studies*, 46(4): 545-570.

Auerbach, A. M. 2019. *Demanding Development: The Politics of Public Goods Provision in India's Urban Slums*. Cambridge University Press.

Auyero, J. 2001. *Poor People's Politics: Peronist Survival Networks and the Legacy of Evita*. Duke University Press.

Bailey, F. G. 1963. *Politics and social change*. University of California Press.

Berenschot, W. 2011. Political Fixers and the Rise of Hindu Nationalism in Gujarat, India: Lubricating a Patronage Democracy. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, *XXXIV*(3), 382–401.

Berenschot, W. 2015. Clientelism, Trust Networks, and India's Identity Politics: Conveying Closeness in Gujarat. *Critical Asian Studies*, *47*(1), 24–43.

Berenschot, W. 2019. Informal democratization: Brokers, access to public services and democratic accountability in Indonesia and India. *Democratization*, *26*(2), 208–224.

Berenschot, W., Hanani, R. & P. Sambodho. 2018. Brokers and citizenship: access to health care in Indonesia, *Citizenship Studies*, 22(2): 129-144.

Berenschot, W., Dhiaulhaq, A. and Deviane, A., 2022. Local brokerage and international leverage: NGOs and land conflicts in Indonesia. *Journal of International Development*. https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3640

Beuving, J. 2013. Playing information games: Démarcheurs in the second-hand car markets of Cotonou, Bénin. *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale*, *21*(1), 2–22.

Bierschenk, Thomas, J-P Chauveau, J-P. and O. de Sardan. 2002. *Local Development Brokers in Africa: The rise of a new social category*. Working Papers Nr. 13, Department of Anthropology and African Studies. Mainz: Johannes Gutenberg University.

Bilecen B. and T. Faist. 2015. "International doctoral students as knowledge brokers: reciprocity, trust and solidarity in transnational networks." *Global Networks - A Journal of Transnational Affairs* 15(2): 217-235.

Blok, A. 1974. *The mafia of a Sicilian Village 1860-1960. A study of Violent Peasant Entrepreneurs*. Basil Blackwell.

Boissevain, Jeremy. 1974. *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Brass, Daniel J. 2022. "New developments in social network analysis." *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 9: 225-246.

Bräuchler, B., Knodel, K., & Röschenthaler, U. 2021. Brokerage from within: A conceptual framework. *Cultural Dynamics*, 33(4), 281–297.

Burt, Ronald. 1992. *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition.* Cambridge,

Bussell, J. 2019. *Clients and constituents: Political responsiveness in patronage democracies*. Oxford University Press.

Calvès, Anne-Emmanuèle. "« Empowerment » : Généalogie d'un Concept Clé Du Discours Contemporain Sur Le Développement." Revue Tiers Monde 200, no. 4 (2009): 735.

Chatterjee, P. 2004. *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*. Columbia University Press.

Crafter, Sarah, de Abreu, Guida, Cline, Tony & Lindsay O'Dell. 2015. "Using vignette methodology as a tool for exploring cultural identity positions of language brokers." *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 28(1): 83-96.

de Jong, S. 2018. "Brokerage and Transnationalism: Present and Past Intermediaries, Social Mobility, and Mixed Loyalties", *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 25(5): 610-628.

de Jong, S. 2016. "Cultural Brokers in Post-colonial Migration Regimes." In: *Negotiating Normativity: Postcolonial Appropriations, Contestations, and Transformations*, edited by N. Dhawan, E. Fink, J. Leinius, and R. Mageza-Barthel, 45-59. Berlin: Springer.

de Jong, S., 2022. Brokers betrayed: The afterlife of Afghan interpreters employed by western armies. *Journal of International Development*. https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3696

De Wit, J., & Berner, E. 2009. Progressive patronage? Municipalities, NGOs, CBOs and the limits to slum dwellers' empowerment. *Development and Change*, *40*(5), 927–947.

DeMaria Harney, N. 2006. Precarious migrant knowledge workers: new entrepreneurial identities in Naples, Italy. *International journal of manpower*, *27*(6): 572-587.

Denissen, I. 2020. How democratization benefits brokers: A comparison of Mexico City and Khartoum. *Democratization*, *27*(1), 44–60.

Diprose, R. 2022. Brokerage, power and gender inclusion: How empowerment-focused civil society organisations bolster women's influence in rural Indonesia. *Journal of International Development*.

Dovi, S. 2002. Preferable descriptive representatives: Will just any woman, black, or Latino do?. *American Political Science Review*, 96(4), 729-743.

Edelman, B., & Mitra, A. 2006. Slum dwellers' access to basic amenities: The role of political contact, its determinants and adverse effects. *Review of Urban & Regional Development Studies*, *18*(1), 25–40.

Ehrhardt, D. 2016. "Janus' Voice: Religious Leaders, Framing, and Riots in Kano". *Contemporary Islam*. 10, 333–356

Ehrhardt, D., 2022. The paradox of co-producing governance with traditional institutions: Diaspora chiefs and minority empowerment in Nigeria. *Journal of International Development*. https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3629

Eriksson Baaz, M., & Utas, M. 2019. Exploring the backstage: methodological and ethical issues surrounding the role of research brokers in insecure zones. *Civil Wars*, *21*(2), 157-178.

Eyben, R. 2011. *Supporting Pathways of Women's Empowerment: A Brief Guide for International Development Organisations*. Brighton: IDS, Pathways of Women's Empowerment.

Faist, Thomas 2014. Brokerage in Cross-Border Mobility: Social Mechanisms and the (Re)Production of Social Inequalities. *Social Inclusion* 2(4): 38-52.

Fechter, A.-M., & Schwittay, A. 2019. Citizen aid: Grassroots interventions in development and humanitarianism. *Third World Quarterly*, *40*(10), 1769–1780.

Geertz, C. 1960. The Javanese Kijaji: The Changing Role of a Cultural Broker. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2: 228-249.

Goodhand, Jonathan, Bart Klem, and Oliver Walton. 2016. Mediating the margins: the role of brokers and the Eastern Provincial Council in Sri Lanka's post-war transition. *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 1(6): 817-836.

Goodhand, J. and Walton, O., 2022a. (Re) making the margins: Frontier assemblages and brokerage in Hambantota, Sri Lanka. *Journal of International Development*. https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3651

Goodhand, J. and Walton, O., 2022b. Fixes and Flux: Frontier Brokers, Political Settlements and Post-War Politics in Nepal and Sri Lanka. *The Journal of Development Studies*, pp.1-18.

Gould, R. V. and R. M. Fernandez. 1989. "A Formal Approach to Brokerage in Transaction Networks." *Sociological Methodology*, 19, pp. 89-126.

Granovetter, M. S. 1973. The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, *78*(6), 1360–1380.

Hinderaker, E. 2002. Translation and Cultural Brokerage. In *A Companion to American Indian History*, edited by P. J. Deloria and N. Salisbury, 357-375. Blackwell: Oxford.

Hill, Marianne. "Development as Empowerment." Feminist Economics 9, no. 2–3 (2003): 117–35.

Holland, A. C., & Palmer-Rubin, B. 2015. Beyond the Machine: Clientelist Brokers and Interest Organizations in Latin America. *Comparative Political Studies*, 1–38.

Jakimow, T. 2018. The "Servants" of Dehradun: A Changing Relationship between Municipal Councillors and Voters in India. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 1–21.

Jeffrey, C., Philliou, C., Rogers, D., & Shryock, A. 2011. Fixers in Motion. A Conversation. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *53*(3), 692–707.

Kaminski, M., Kaufman, J., Graubarth, R., & Robins, T. (2000). How do people become empowered? A case study of union activists. Human Relations, 53, 1357-1383.

Kern, Alice; Müller-Böker. 2015. "The middle space of migration: A case study on brokerage and recruitment agencies in Nepal." *Geoforum*, 65: 158-169.

Koster, Martijn and Yves P. B. van Leynseele. 2018. Brokers as assemblers: Studying development through the lens of brokerage. *Ethnos,* 83:5, 803-813.

Koster, Martijn. 2014. Brazilian brokers, boundaries and buildings: a material culture of politics. *Journal of Material Culture,* 19(2): 125-144.

Lewis, David and David Mosse. 2006. *Development brokers and translators: The ethnography of aid and agencies.* West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.

Lindquist, Johan, Xiang, B., & Yeoh, Brenda. S. 2012. Opening the black box of migration: Brokers, the organization of transnational mobility and the changing political economy in Asia. *Pacific Affairs*, 85(1): 7-19.

Lindquist, Johan. 2015a. Anthropology of Brokers and Brokerage. In: *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Science, 2nd edition.* Ed. James D. Wright. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2, p. 870-874.

Lindquist, Johan. 2015b. Of figures and types: brokering knowledge and migration in Indonesia and beyond. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute,* 21.S1: 162-177.

Marabello, S., 2022. The Janus face of development brokers across migration borders. *Journal of International Development.* https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3655

Mathews, G., 2022. African trading brokers in China: The internet, Covid-19 and the transformation of low-end globalization. *Journal of International Development.* https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3654

Meehan, P., & Plonski, S. (2017). *Brokering the margins: A review of concepts and methods*. SOAS and the University of Bath, Working Paper No.1

Merry, Sally Engle. 2006. Transnational human rights and local activism: Mapping the middle. *American anthropologist*, *108*(1), 38-51.

Pope, N., 2022. Militias going rogue: Social dilemmas and coercive brokerage in Rio de Janeiro's urban frontier. *Journal of International Development*. https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3636

Raeymaekers, T., Menkhaus, K. and Vlassenroot, K., 2008. State and non-state regulation in African protracted crises: governance without government?. *Afrika focus*, *21*(2), pp.7-21.

Reddy, G. R., & Haragopal, G. 1985. The pyraveekar:" The fixer" in rural India. *Asian Survey*, *25*(11), 1148–1162.

Reinecke, J., Donaghey, J., Wilkinson, A., & Wood, G. 2018. Global supply chains and social relations at work: Brokering across boundaries. *Human Relations*, *71*(4), 459–480.

Romanos, Eduardo. 2016. "Immigrants as brokers: dialogical diffusion from Spanish indignados to Occupy Wall Street." *Social Movement Studies* 15(3): 247-262.

Rowlands, J., 1995. "Empowerment examined", *Development in practice*, 5(2), pp.101-107.

Salovesh, M. 1987. When Cultural Brokers Go Broke: Implications of Role Failure in Cultural Brokerage. In *Perspectives on Ethnicity*, edited by R. E. Holloman and S. A. Arutiunov, 351-371. The Hague: Mouton Publishers.

Severs, E. and S. de Jong. 2018. Preferable minority representatives: brokerage and betrayal. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 51(2), 345-350.

Simmel, G. 1950. *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Kurt H. Wolff, ed. Glencoe, Illinois: the Free Press.

Stokes, Susan C., Thad Dunning, Marcelo Nazareno, and Valeria Brusco. 2013. *Brokers, voters, and clientelism: The puzzle of distributive politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stovel, K., B. Golub, and E. M. Milgrom. 2011. Stabilizing Brokerage. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108 (Supplement 4) 21326-21332

Sud, N. 2014. The men in the middle: A missing dimension in global land deals. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, *41*(4), 593–612.

Sukarieh, M., & Tannock, S. (2019). Subcontracting academia: alienation, exploitation and disillusionment in the UK overseas Syrian refugee research industry. *Antipode*, *51*(2), 664-680.

Volkov, V., 2016. *Violent entrepreneurs: The use of force in the making of Russian capitalism*. Cornell University Press.

Wolf, E. 1956. "Aspects of group relations in a complex society: Mexico." *American Anthropologist* 58(6): 1065–78.

Wood, G., 2003. Staying secure, staying poor: the "Faustian Bargain". *World Development*, *31*(3), pp.455-471.

Yıldırım, K. 2020. Clientelism and dominant incumbent parties: Party competition in an urban Turkish neighbourhood. *Democratization*, *27*(1), 81–99.