

A slow and steady journey with Action Research

Interview with Malida Mooken

Malida Mooken, Danilo Streck, Miren Larrea

Danilo and Miren:

You are from Mauritius, you studied in Scotland, and you live in Canada. How do you think this has influenced your perspective on the global challenges we are facing nowadays?

Malida:

My perspectives of current global challenges are indeed shaped by where I come from, where I have been, and where I am: geographically and also culturally, philosophically, and emotionally. I often find myself positioned in more than one place or space, living in-between, back and forth, unsettled.

After my first degree and subsequently working for a few months in an offshore management company, I left Mauritius to undertake a Master degree at the University of Birmingham, in England. That was in 2007. The Master programme had a strong basis in industrial economics and I gained a critical appreciation of capitalism, globalisation, governance, and the impact of those on the competitiveness, and socio-economic development of industries, localities, regions, and countries. The scholarly work of Roger Sugden and Keith Cowling, especially *Transnational Monopoly Capitalism* had a significant influence on my thinking. My enhanced understanding of those issues led me to take a more critical look at the socio-economic development of Mauritius, which is often portrayed as an “economic success story in Africa” and I read about development in other small state economies. My concerns were centred on the effect of globalisation, activities of transnational corporations, and premature deindustrialisation. Those concerns were also tied in to my personal observations (from a young age) of changes taking place, for example in the textile industry, and the more general and increasing emphasis on the service sector in Mauritius.

I later moved to Scotland for my doctoral studies. There, I found myself mostly interested in reading philosophical texts by John Dewey, Jürgen Habermas, Paulo Freire: to name a few. A significant and lasting influence on understanding socio-economic issues has been the human development and capability approach (HDCA) developed by Amartya Sen and other scholars such as Martha Nussbaum, Sabina Alkire, and Ingrid Robeyns. A fundamental concern of the approach is with freedom and human flourishing, inspired by the works of Aristotle, Adam Smith, Rabindranath Tagore, among others. From reading Sen, I got interested in *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill and the much less discussed book of Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. The “human” substantive individual and collective freedoms, relational aspects, value judgments, choice, action and consequences became more central in my thinking.

An offer of a postdoctoral research position at the University of British Columbia brought me to British Columbia in Canada. My experience here has triggered reflections about the in-