Introduction: Time to Reimagine Development?

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Abstract The major global crises of the past four years – financial, fuel, food, climate – have collectively had a dramatic impact on people's lives and livelihoods. Have they also had a large impact on core ideas underlying mainstream development? Drawing on a number of Reimagining Development case studies and on a much wider literature, this article examines the impacts of the crises on lives and livelihoods and also on core development ideas. First the article sets out why the current time is a good one for reimagining. Then it highlights some of the new ideas that are emerging and some of the older ones that are making a reappearance. Finally, the article reflects on the challenges of reimagining development and processes that are important if new ideas are to make a difference.

1 Introduction

The field of international development policy is young. Established in its present form in the late 1940s, it has evolved out of colonial policy and in response to public policy in the West. It has played a role in the Cold War and embraced new ideas about poverty, globalisation and human rights. But the combined assault of the global financial crisis, the food and fuel price crisis (labelled the 'Triple F' crisis) and the slow burn of climate change has been a stress test for our current model of international development, the like of which we have never seen. Not only is this combination of crises having a profound impact on development outcomes, it is also bringing into question our core ideas about what development is and how it happens.

Of course, much has been written on this of late. The Sarkozy Commission on Measuring Societal Progress (Stiglitz *et al.* 2009) uses the question of whether we are measuring the right thing to critically evaluate whether the frameworks for development policy are correct. Tim Jackson (2009) revives earlier arguments by Galbraith (1958) and Mishan (1967) which question our notion of prosperity and its relation to the kind of economic growth we have become hooked on. Paul Collier (2011) argues that economics has got it wrong when it comes to intergenerational decisions about the environment. Dani Rodrik (2011) thinks that the limits of economic globalisation have been reached for now and that democracy and national self-determination must be put first in future. In different ways Paul Krugman (2009), Robert Skidelsky (2009) and Nassim Taleb (2008) eviscerate an economics that puts beauty before truth and has the audacity to assume it can assign probabilities (and hence prices) to all risks. Severino and Ray (2009) argue for a completely new model of development cooperation to deal with the realisation that we are imperfectly providing global public goods such as climate mitigation, trade regulation, financial flow controls, narcotics control, arms trade regulation and global crisis insurance – and that the consequences of these imperfections are growing.

The Sarkozy Commission concludes by arguing for the need '… to shift emphasis from measuring economic production to measuring people's well-being' (Stiglitz *et al.* 2009: 12). This conclusion captures the zeitgeist of current development thinking: it emphasises concerns for the human outcomes of development processes. The Human Development movement provided much of the early momentum in the argument for such a shift in focus but this has been reinforced and complemented in recent

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years by the (re)emergence of debates and studies that focus on human wellbeing and happiness (Gough and McGregor 2007; Layard 2005, 2010). Similarly, there are calls for more sustainable futures where natural resources are generated, distributed and cared for equitably. Low carbon growth, the green economy, zero growth and prosperity without growth are a few examples (see Jackson 2009).

While it is possible that we are unaware of the Southern voices on these issues, many of the contributions to this rethinking have been written from a Western intellectual perspective with some of it not well connected to globalised ground realities. So, triggered by the global financial crisis, IDS researchers, students and partners embarked on the Reimagining Development initiative in an effort to further expand this zeitgeist and to build a more grounded basis for the discussion. In this we were particularly concerned to understand how this moment in history might affect development thinking and practice. The aim of the initiative was:

- to build a grounded view of the effects of the crisis in people's lives
- to explore whether it was challenging the core assumptions that we hold about development
- to surface new ideas emerging in different sectors in the wake of the crisis.

The experimental nature of the work is reflected in the way the project was set up. We knew we wanted at least 20–30 places and spaces where we could explore the issues raised above. This type of global co-construction is a key part of the new IDS strategy and builds on an approach used in Haddad and Knowles (2007). Given the modest size of the budget, we had to build on ongoing work to achieve this aim. We put out a call to IDS partners, staff, students and alumni around the world offering them very modest amounts of financial support in return for their reflections on the above aims in the context of their ongoing work. This process probably limited our ability to listen to the most radical rethinks that were ongoing. The next filter for the received expressions of interest was each site's potential ability to answer some of the questions posed in an original and high-quality manner. For these proposed sites we used a template to select those that gave the maximum spread of geography, sectors (private, security, faiths, NGOs, bilateral and multilateral, media) and level of aggregation (micro, macro, meso). Hence the articles in this *IDS Bulletin* are not research papers, but thinkpieces, often reflecting on very specific events. The article by Burns (this *IDS Bulletin*) reflects on the strengths and weaknesses of this type of methodology.

The articles in this *IDS Bulletin* are from the places and spaces (or sites) that managed to answer some of the questions posed in ways that the editors thought were interesting and contributed to the diversity of ongoing attempts to reimagine development. As a set they are varied. They solicit views from different groups: civil society (Hossain, Goldenberg, Allcock and Kainja), donors (Wolcott and Haddad), practitioners (Gunetilleke *et al.*, Ho, Berdou), the UK private sector (Wolcott a), financial sector (McCulloch, Wolcott b), UK faith-based groups (Tadros), agriculturists (Habermann), indigenous groups (Shankland) rural communities (Mehta), the state (Berenson, Pollard *et al.*), the UK public (Lindstrom and Henson), and IDS students (Naess).

None of the places and spaces addressed all the aims but, as a set, they give us a new and unusual perspective on them. Interestingly nearly all sites informed an unasked question: what are the enablers and barriers to such reimagining? From the donors in London to the Kutchi community in India, most sites and groups found this extremely challenging; this in turn forced us to reflect on why new thoughts should be so hard to think.

The next section of this article reflects on why it is important to reflect on these issues at this time. There are and have been lots of crises and we must consider what is different about this conjunction of events. The following section describes some of the impacts of the crises and some of the reimaginings that emerged from the sites. In the final section of the article we discuss the distribution and types of reimagining that this exercise has revealed. We use a political economy approach, adopting Hall's 'interests, institutions and ideas' framework (1997), in order to understand what supports and what inhibits reimagining. This allows us to reflect on what might be done to support the future adaptive capacity of the global community concerned with the pressing challenges of international development.

2 Reimagining: why now?

There is no bad time to question core assumptions, and crises come and go, but there are several good reasons which, in combination, lead us to believe this time is different. First, the financial crisis was driven by particular patterns of behaviour in conjunction with poor institutional performance and regulation in the richer countries (Skidelsky 2009) and this has resulted in an all-round questioning of the type of development that has been held up as a model for others to emulate.

Second, this combination of crises (the Triple F) are systemic in their origins: the global financial crisis is the result of weak regulation of international and national financial systems; the food and fuel crises are indicative of failures in global production, trading and regulatory systems to maintain stable prices; and climate change is the result of rapid increases in economic growth and carbon emissions, which global governance cannot meaningfully get to grips with and which technology cannot do enough to decouple (Jackson 2009). All, in some way, reflect the dark sides of unfettered capitalist accumulation.

Third, the crises have been global in their impact. They have affected more people than other crises and they have done so very quickly. While Asia appears to have escaped the worst of the global financial crisis in terms of GDP/capita, it has done less well in human outcome terms and there has been considerable variation within the region (Dolphin and Chappell 2010). Habib *et al.* (2010) contrast the experience of Bangladesh (little impact on *per capita* consumption in the poorest groups) and the Philippines (the largest proportional impacts felt at the bottom of the income scale). The Commonwealth of Independent States (former Soviet Republics) (CIS) countries fared the worst, then the West, and then Africa and the Middle East. But all were affected. The changes were rapid. Global hunger numbers had remained static for the previous decade between 800 and 900 million, but in just two years, they broke one billion and are not yet back to pre-crisis levels (FAO 2010). The number of people living below $1.25 or $2 a day is estimated to have increased by 50–120 million, depending on the cut-off and year used (Ravallion 2009).

Fourth, we did not foresee the way that this crisis would unfold globally. The British Academy, in its letter to the Queen in July 2009 about the global financial crisis puts it well: 'Many people did foresee the crisis. However, the exact form that it would take and the timing of its onset and ferocity were foreseen by nobody.' There were macro warnings, but the will or ability to act was absent. The micro indications of the way that the crises were impacting and spreading were diffuse and late in being picked up. Those who advocated insurance-first (act now, even if there is a small cost to prevent the chance of a much bigger cost later on – essentially the Stern Review approach) were branded as alarmists. The warning signals were weak and they were obscured by squabbles (see Levchenko *et al*. 2010).

Fifth, it is not clear that after learning from this shock that we are any less vulnerable to future global systemic shocks. The population and income increases of the next 40 years combined with the need for agriculture to reduce emissions means that there will have to be a radical rethink of the way food is produced if the world food system is to be productive, equitable and sustainable (Godfray *et al.* 2010) but the beginnings of serious reform are difficult to detect. While some mainstream economists seem to have reached a consensus on what needs to be done to avert the global financial crisis (Evans 2010; Turner *et al.* 2010), the power of the banking industry means that it is very uncertain that options to increase financial resilience will be implemented (Persaud 2010). Against this backdrop of uncertainty and volatility, Kanbur (2009) has claimed that crises are the 'new normal'.

With all of this in mind it is apparent that the global financial crisis stimulated further political space for the discussion of what needs to change. Climate change had already been a big stimulus for rethinking and many governments accept the challenge of environmental sustainability and many see the need to reduce the energy intensity of growth. Even before this financial crisis emerged academics such as Avner Offer, Tim Kasser and Richard Wilkinson were arguing that current patterns of societal progress have been dysfunctional for human wellbeing (Offer 2006; Kasser 2002; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). Against this backdrop there have been arguments for reorienting public and development policy to human wellbeing outcomes (McGregor and Sumner 2010) or to happiness (Layard 2010).

The political space for reimagining is, however, unstable and unevenly distributed. As the immediate impacts of the crisis recede the tendency will be for such space to shrink. But the global financial crisis has allowed some new ideas to jockey for position in a relatively open field and has made deliberate reflection on development thinking particularly important. Ongoing events such as the so-called 'Arab Spring' and the ongoing Eurozone crisis remind us of the possibility of further rounds of global instability and as such maintain the impetus for reimagining.

3 Reimaginings: what new ideas are emerging about development?

So what kinds of reimagining have been revealed by this process? Given the considerable diversity of types of site and ways in which the questions of reimagining were framed, there is a challenge in hearing what this complex set of voices had to say. Nevertheless, and while recognising that we brought our own concerns and interests with us, there are a number of areas around which ideas are surfacing or resurfacing, and in which we see possible new directions in development thought.

3.1 *Vulnerability and complexity are more globalised*

This financial crisis was global: its adverse impacts have been experienced in rich and poor countries. For some this has come as something of a shock and particularly so in developed countries which for the past 20 years have experienced considerable economic stability. The crises have further discredited a view of the world that draws hard and fast distinctions between developed and developing status. In short, the reports from across the reimagining sites illustrate the depth and complexity of contemporary globalisation.

In many places in the world, trying to cope with uncertainties about life and death, survival and deprivation, work and destitution as well as environmental change is the norm (Ethiopia, India and Brazil). A key message from these sites was that many places are used to adapting to seasonal variability and the accompanying food and water shortages, often alongside economic and political instability. There may well be important learning to be derived from such crisis-affected contexts for those of us living in places where crisis is more infrequent.

For example, Wolcott's (b) site highlighted how financiers are increasingly turning to ecological sciences and chaos theory to relearn that it is not possible to control the outcomes of the financial system. This need for insights from complexity theory is also echoed in the analysis in McGregor (this *IDS Bulletin*) of the experiences of organisations tasked with monitoring the human impacts of this complex crisis on different peoples' lives. Development thinking and practice needs to be more alive to the reality of complexity so that it can be navigated more adeptly (Bienhocker 2007; Ramalingam and Jones 2008). The Panic Tax proposal from McCulloch (this *IDS Bulletin*) is a good example of a policy response that acknowledges the potential for realisation of complex and adverse consequences of individually rational choices in financial transactions and proposes a tax on the speed of those transactional flows.

3.2 *The nation-state is more relevant than ever*

Given the weakness of current global governance mechanisms, the consequences of the greater interconnectedness of vulnerabilities cannot be dealt with by global mechanisms. National policies and politics will still determine the ability of societies to manage vulnerability. The MDG site (Pollard *et al.*, this *IDS Bulletin*) highlighted the role of the country context and the important role of the state as central to the delivery of human development goals pre- and post-2015. With the world's poor concentrated more and more in big, unequal, middle-income countries, questions about the role of the state cannot fail to re-emerge as central to poverty reduction (Sumner 2010). The donor's site (Wolcott and Haddad, this *IDS Bulletin*) explicitly highlighted the challenging trade-offs between poverty reduction, other national self interests and collective action for global goods production. The Ukraine site (Berenson, this *IDS Bulletin*) reminded us that state-provided social protection can provide insulation from the consequences of shocks, but they can also obscure the need for change to national policies. One final note of caution, the Brazil site reminds us that some groups such as indigenous peoples are not well served by even the most successful national social protection policies (Shankland, this *IDS Bulletin*).

3.3 *Wellbeing is being taken more seriously*

The concept of wellbeing has been integral to the development literature for some time (Sen 1993; McGregor 2007), but the financial and climate crises have brought the question: 'what are we striving for?' into sharper relief. The Kutch site (Mehta, this *IDS Bulletin*) indicates that rapid economic growth has failed to produce a more equitable, socially and gender-just society and forces us to consider what we might regard the qualities of good development to be.

The article by Gunetilleke, De Silva and Lokuge (this *IDS Bulletin*) explores what is perceived to be a growing gap between the orthodox development models that development professionals work with and the personal values that they hold dear in their own lives. The dominance of the view that economic growth is unquestionably a 'good thing' rather than something that will only be useful if it reduces poverty and is compatible with sustainable environmental resource use is a particular tension. The article by Tadros (this *IDS Bulletin*) explores how faith-based organisations are arguing for a different vision of what human flourishing means, one that is less based on acquisition and more on relations and meaning. The Crisis Watch article (McGregor, this *IDS Bulletin*) concludes by noting the strengthening hold of thinking in development that argues for a focus on the social relationships that make societies work well and which allow us to live well.

3.4 *The rise (and fall?) of resilience*

Although not new, the idea of resilience has been given new policy momentum by the financial crisis. It has already brought some new thinking to discussions of poverty, first, by connecting directly to discussions of capabilities and a more people-focused conception of poverty reduction; and second, by beginning to draw attention to the non-income and non-material dimensions of human coping with shocks and crises – the informal and collective support systems, the strategic use of time and labour, the significance of moral and emotional ties – that are typically missed (and misunderstood) when researched through narrower conceptions of poverty. Third, it has helped signal priority areas for social protection investments that people value, by highlighting the social and personal resources people run down to keep going when times are suddenly and unusually tough. And fourth, it has had universal resonance, so it does not apply exclusively to the experiences of poverty in the developing world. This gives it a particular potency at a time when development challenges are being recognised as global problems requiring global solutions.

Resilience also has come to the fore at this moment partly because with its pleasing connotations of flexibility and creative adaptive potential, it strikes a note of optimism in an otherwise gloomy global outlook and is in keeping with the trend of drawing on biological metaphors while describing crisis and complexity. Yet there is a natural suspicion about the scope for resilience among people whose capabilities have been squeezed by poverty, climate change and the demands for flexibility in a competitive market model of development. Resilience usually refers to the ability of a system to adapt and maintain itself (Adger 2000), but as the Crisis Watch site (McGregor, this *IDS Bulletin*) illustrates, the resilience of one part of the system is often achieved at costs to other parts. For example, the resilience of households in times of crisis is often achieved at the cost of a greater burden of work and self-exploitation by women, and the resilience of firms is often dependent upon flexibilised labour markets in which marginal migrant workers can be laid off (McCulloch and Grover 2010). At both global and national levels, macroeconomic resilience is soon to be paid for by fiscal deficits, the price of which is likely to be cuts to public services.

The ubiquity of resilience suggests it may be seen as the next great panacea for the development industry. But in the wake of this crisis we have only just begun to recognise the political economy of resilience. In terms of human societies, where people are not just functioning organisms but are sentient beings that operate with meanings, aspirations and agency, resilience is a complex concept that is linked to normative issues concerning justice, and social relations of power (Leach *et al.* 2010). No doubt there are good and bad forms of resilience depending on one's perspective – clearly more work needs to be done if we are to understand when resilience is a positive adaptation (and for who) and when it is not.

3.5 *Inequality is back (although it never went away)*

The global financial crisis did not slow down India's GDP *per capita* 'graduation' to middle-income status even though it probably added to India's poverty numbers (Sumner 2010). This is just one of the ways in which inequality has become more apparent in the post-2008 world (MDG site, Pollard *et al.*, this *IDS Bulletin*). A number of UN agencies are focusing on the intractability of poverty and worsening of inequality that has accompanied policies of globalisation and economic liberalisation and as the greatest deterrent to MDG success (UNICEF 2010; Ortiz and Cummins 2011, UNRISD 2010). In a new, more practical twist, inequality is being presented as a problem that can be dealt with in an operational way – as an issue that UNICEF, for example (UNICEF 2011), or a progressive country government could address with well-designed policies (of which there is much experience around the world). Tackling inequality is increasingly seen as an important part of winning the war on poverty. Whether these approaches can tackle head on the root causes of inequality, namely issues of identity, gender and status and the social relations and processes of discrimination and exclusion that are founded in the distribution of power within societies is an open question.

3.6 *Current economics is a dangerous monoculture*

In the past six to eight years or so key assumptions of economics have been found to do violence to reality, and hence, via poor policy choices, violence to human wellbeing. Core assumptions around information asymmetries, definitions of rationality, independence of behaviour, discounting, and the ability to insure against all risks were shown wanting prior to 2008 (Coyle 2007). Krugman 'don't mistake truth for beauty' (2009) and Skidelsky 'we need to acknowledge irreducible uncertainties' (2009) elaborate on how economics got it wrong in the context of the global financial crisis. The LSE letter to the Queen describes the failure to predict the ferocity of the crisis as a 'failure of collective of imagination of many bright people', which suggests that there aren't enough checks and balances in place to keep economics grounded in the real world where flaws and friction are the norm, not perfection and the absence of friction (Krugman 2009). Economists must become much more alive to when their models and assumptions can no longer offer a strategic simplification of complex reality and in fact when they begin to do violence to reality and to people's lives and livelihoods. This has fundamental implications for how economics is taught, the mix of disciplines that development research organisations hire and the heterogeneity of economics schools and economic schools of thought that they draw on. Wade's (2009) 'neoclassical monoculture' in economics, makes the discipline very susceptible to shocks. Dasgupta (2005) describes economic modelling as a 'strategic simplification of complicated reality'. We would argue that the crises illustrated that the space over which such strategic simplification is valid is rapidly diminishing. Nowhere is this space closing in more rapidly than in the economics of the environment and natural resource scarcity. Perspectives as different as Collier (2011) and Mehta (2010) argue that economics has got it wrong on the environment. Two of our sites reported on gatherings of business leaders (Wolcott a, this *IDS Bulletin*) and financial sector leaders (Wolcott b, this *IDS Bulletin*) who were searching for changes to their paradigms to support the environmental sustainability agenda. Both sites discuss the challenges to the reimaginings in both areas. For the finance participants, the sheer technical complexity of the sector acts as a barrier to reform for all but the most knowledgeable insiders. For the more general business participants there was a perceived lack of agency – who has the authority to do anything differently when the systems they operate in are designed by government choices about market structures and regulations?

The run up to Rio+20 is going to ensure that radical and non-radical proposals for reconciling certain types of growth with environmental sustainability are given political space. It will also lead to calls for limiting growth. There is a strong case for limiting growth that does not do much for poverty reduction and worsens the environment. But the challenge is to identify forms of growth that do reduce poverty, promote wellbeing and protect the planet and then seek to align political forces at the national and international levels behind these forms and those trying to pursue them. This will necessitate a change in the infrastructure of policymaking, with a more varied mix of disciplinary backgrounds involved in formulation and implementation and, even within economics there needs to be a greater plurality of economic approaches invited inside the policymaking tent (Chang 2010).

3.7 *The role of civil society in times of crisis*

What has happened to civil societies in the wake of the shocks? With the exception of the 'Arab Spring' countries (and we still do not really understand the drivers of those movements) global civil society in the form of large NGOs does not seem to have risen to the challenge or opportunity afforded by the crisis moment (Hossain, this *IDS Bulletin*). There is little evidence of fundamental changes generated in development policy through their efforts. Hossain ascribes this, in part, to the difficulty of cutting across the 'silos' of civil society's own areas of specialism at a time when collective and general action was called for. At the same time, however, NGOs and civil society groups across the world have seen their funding cut and have experienced uncertainties that severely impede their own operational and advocacy capacities (Goldenberg, this *IDS Bulletin*). What kinds of roles can they be playing? Our sites suggest two examples: enhancing voice and strengthening multiple accountabilities.

Amidst immense noise, citizens struggle – sometimes successfully – to hear and for their voices to be heard. Existing technologies such as public opinion panels can help articulate views, but uncovering the drivers of those views requires a more sophisticated listening mechanism, one that allows for repeated engagement such as a panel of correspondents (Lindstrom and Henson, this *IDS Bulletin*). Newer communication technologies clearly have the potential to amplify citizen voice in terms of volume and collective coherence, but the sites that looked at these new technologies recognised that they are not panaceas. Instead, the sites (Berdou, and Allcock and Kainja, this *IDS Bulletin*) highlight the need to be aware of the power and access dynamics that one might find in any participatory process. These may be short-circuited through the use of new communication technologies but just as easily they may be reinforced. Like any technology they have the potential for good and damage. Development practitioners and academics who use the technologies need to be aware of the limitations and benefits that surround them.

Given that rich country behaviour is responsible for so much of the impacts of the crisis in poorer contexts, can civil society develop ways of promoting multiple accountabilities to citizens in poorer ones as well as to citizens in richer ones? The ActionAid site (Ho, this *IDS Bulletin*) suggests that it is not so easy to do this in practice, but that asking the simple question 'does this strengthen people's agency?' is a vital and meaningful guide.

4 The barriers to and enablers of reimagining

Reviewing the reports from the various sites, it is apparent that the extent to which reimagining was taking place as a result of the global financial crisis was very mixed. In some of the sites reimagining clearly was taking place and had been prompted by the financial crisis, but in other cases either people appeared to be unaware of the global financial crisis or, if they were aware it, it was perceived as a crisis for and of the North and therefore it was not something that required or prompted reimagining. There were other cases, such as Brazil and Ethiopia, where there was reimagining but it wasn't particularly associated with 'the crisis' but rather was a product of different social, economic and political dynamics in the countries concerned. In most of the other sites there was a diverse range of ways in which people had been prompted to reimagine but these resulted in quite different forms and extents of reimagining.

In this final section of the article we briefly explore how we might understand the differential opportunity and capacity for reimagining. To do this we bring a political economy analysis to bear and consider the ways in which power operates to restrict or to enable the forms of reimagining that are possible. In particular we use Hall's institutionalist framework which explores the ways in which the three Is – 'ideas, institutions and interests' – shape the pathways of change (Hall 1997). But before we embark on a discussion of that it is important first to acknowledge that a number of our sites reveal much about the operation of more brutal and naked forms of power that operate in poor and unequal societal contexts and that were evident as the global financial crisis impacted. Roughly speaking this type of power equates to the threat of harm through physical violence or the removal of protection, or the denial of a person's ability to feed themselves or their children and this means that you cannot speak out; that you dare not reveal that you might imagine things differently. Across these various sites we find glimpses of this overt power working against reimagining development. For the migrant workers in factories of the export zones that were hit by the crisis, the prospect of losing your job was a profound disincentive for reimagining (Hossain and Green 2011). In the case of the Malawi Development Exchange, a virtual safe space was provided for people to discuss development issues, illustrating the fear of repercussions should these views be expressed openly (Allcock and Kainja, this *IDS Bulletin*). In Gujarat, where despite significant material progress traditional values that support gendered repression still hold strong, an abandoned wife is separated from her son because social norms cannot be challenged (Mehta, this *IDS Bulletin*).

There are many other examples throughout this *IDS Bulletin* and also in other reports from the financial crisis where the threat of violence, economic exclusion or social marginalisation operates openly and overtly to repress reimagining. These cannot be understated but they work in conjunction with many more subtle ways in which a broader reimagining of development is blocked. In the institutional analysis of change provided by Hall, change is understood to occur where there is a conjunction of ideas, institutions and interests. Historical analyses suggest that it is seldom the case that changes in any one of these three elements alone will be sufficient to generate wider societal change. Thus in the wake of the financial crisis we saw an initial outcry, calling for new ideas to govern our global development strategy and thinking, but we have to ask whether the conditions in the institutions of development and the balance of interests globally provide support for new ideas (reimaginings) to take hold and drive social change in a new direction?

Ideas: the evidence from the Reimagining Development sites and elsewhere is that there are plenty of new ideas around but that they currently struggle to cohere with each other as a challenge to the development orthodoxy. There has been much talk in academic development circles of an impending or ongoing paradigm shift but there is no indication that a new paradigm for understanding development and guiding development policy and practice has taken hold. Frustration with this position was expressed strongly by the participants in the IDS student site (Naess, this *IDS Bulletin*) but still no clear alternative was enunciated. If we review the various sites we find an indication of the different ideas around which there is some convergence. Most strongly there is a strong push for a development model that is more human and ecocentric; that focuses on a broader notion of human wellbeing than has been previously adopted and where just sustainability is an overarching goal. Complexity thinking also surfaces regularly and there is a view that these human beings need to be seen in the context of human societal systems that are complex, dynamic and under threat.

One of the big threats is climate change and thinking on this has been and will be a big game changer for development models. Climate change requires us not just to link justice, political economy and sustainability more concretely (than was for example set out in the Brundtland Report of 1987) but also compels us to take seriously present and future threats to human wellbeing that require adaption now, for poor people already affected by a changing climate. It also demands profound system changes to both the economy and society at wider spatial and temporal scales.

One of the upshots of this plethora of new ideas for development is that there is considerable evidence of value dissonance amongst participants across the various reimagining sites. In this case value dissonance refers to a situation where people reported a lack of consistency, or harmony, or even outright conflict between their personal values for development and the professional development models and practice that they work with. This was explicitly explored in the Sri Lanka site (Gunetilleke *et al.* this *IDS Bulletin*) but was also evident in other sites such as the UK aid donors (Walcott and Haddad, this *IDS Bulletin*) and MDGs sites (Pollard *et al.*, this *IDS Bulletin*). In many of the cases this value dissonance had clearly been further stimulated by the financial crisis (see Wolcott a, Wolcott b and Pollard *et al.*, all this *IDS Bulletin*) while in the Ethiopia site (Habermann, this *IDS Bulletin*) value dissonance was evident but for reasons not associated with the financial crisis.

Value dissonance is important and problematic for aid agencies and aid professionals and is related to the Gramscian notion of contradictory consciousness. This is where the interaction of the two sets of forces may result in: '… a situation in which the contradictory character of consciousness does not permit any action, any decision or any choice and produces a condition of moral and political passivity' (Gramsci, from Femia 1981: 33). It points to a potential for paralysis in new development thinking and this is a dangerous position for development professionals at time of ever greater challenges. In this context it is important to consider how this value dissonance sits in relation to institutional change in international development.

Institutions: There are diverse ways to view institutions (see Leftwich and Sen 2011) and for here we adopt a broad definition of institutions where these are seen as ranging from norms (how we normally do things), through to societal institutions (the societal arrangements that shape what we should and should not do), through to social practices that regularise behaviour over time through to the various organisations (such as development agencies and NGOs) that have embedded in them the theories, practices, meanings and norms about what constitutes development 'business as usual'. A review of the various sites suggests that this is the area where reimagining is most difficult and where change is not readily observed. While individuals were feeling a need for a change in ideas to tackle new problems and to better orient development towards a more human-centric notion, it often was reported that the organisations they found themselves in and the institutional frameworks and ways of doing things were not supportive of such a shift. As we have noted, the ideas for Reimagining Development suggest a broader development agenda and a broader range of people to be engaged with than hitherto, but the obstacles to this were illustrated in the donors site (Wolcott and Haddad, this *IDS Bulletin*). As the authors put it, 'One of the greatest areas of uncertainty raised by the participants was the degree to which ODA and agencies specialising in ODA should – or even could – tackle the global management issues given their limited mandates.' In terms of reimagining development this has the potential to be the real sclerosis. Although the Sarkozy Commission recommended, as a starting point, a shift from measuring production and wealth towards measuring human wellbeing, it is much less clear about how this might be done. The sense from the Reimagining Development sites is that the historic orthodoxy in development is very well embedded within major development organisations. It frames and shapes their internal ideas and practices, it limits the scope of discussion and it is difficult to work against. The article by Ho (this *IDS Bulletin*) gives some insight into the type of effort that is required within organisations to institutionally reimagine policies and procedures. At the very least the failure to seriously review the models, practices and procedures that constitute 'business as usual' for development agencies, represents a profound restriction on the space for Reimagining Development and for the ability of new ideas to find traction.

Interests: Finally, we can ask whether the reports from the various sites indicate any shifts in the balance of interest that might support a Reimagining of Development. Again the story is mixed. As we have noted, there are many cases where the existing balance of interests strongly repress any possibility of meaningful reimagining. But there is also evidence of increasing levels of dissent and open rejection of values systems associated with orthodox development values. Out there in the world there is increasing evidence of the contestation of dominant development models (the Arab Spring, Greece and the broader Eurozone Crisis, food riots in a range of developing countries). However, there is also a broader shift in the balance of global interests which is touched on in the articles here. Brazil, China and India all represent important new powers emerging into the international scene and the increased significance of the G20 is a major indicator of this. It can be expected that they will bring with them different views on how development should be conducted and practiced and as such the global debate will be further energised. In the articles here we find intriguing and mixed messages. From the Brazil site we find the bold assertion of newly imagined inclusive governance arrangements that are being developed and explored as part of the internal transformation (Shankland, this *IDS Bulletin*). But equally, in the case from India presented here (or more precisely from Gujarat), rapid and successful development is not matched by any transformative thinking (Mehta, this *IDS Bulletin*).

An important consideration in this potential shift in the global balance of interests is the role of new information and communications technologies (ICTs). Reflecting on the case of one project in Kenya, Berdou (this *IDS Bulletin*) recognises that each generation of ICTs has come with its promises for democratisation and empowerment for poor people but that each has failed to live up to the full extent of the expectations it raised. ICTs have the potential to contribute to shift the balance of interests. As the Malawi case shows, they can create some space for Reimagining Development in that they can provide a means of exchanging ideas and for giving voice to some whose voices have hitherto been repressed or ignored. But as Berdou notes, 'The latest generation of ICTs can also be used to disempower as much as empower communities…'. In this respect the contribution of new ICTs to Reimagining Development will depend on who seeks to use these technologies and how they are controlled.

5 Some concluding observations

Overall this analysis of the Reimagining Development sites illustrates how difficult it is to get away from 'business as usual'. The Crisis Watch article (McGregor, this *IDS Bulletin*) confirms this by noting that after the initial shock of the financial crisis in which there was a clamour for new ideas, a backlash narrative begun to grow that suggested that actually things had not been as bad as might have been expected and that the old models were not as bad as had been feared. This is of course contested and depends on which data you are looking at. Other sites also noted the difficulty of getting away from the status quo (e.g. in Ukraine, in the financial and private sector sites, in the IDS teaching site and in the donor site).

We have seen some changed thinking and the notions of wellbeing, resilience, and equity have been embraced and re-embraced and drawn into the development discourse. But it remains a moot point whether development thinking is any better suited now for coping with unforeseen crises than it had been before 2008. And of course the big known threats still confront us with no ready solutions. Climate change remains one of the big threats but, as extension of the analysis here, it is not clear that the institutional framework and the balance of interests have shifted sufficiently for development to be reimagined in any significant way.

Humankind has made great advances in reducing poverty and disease and in promoting freedoms over the past 50 years. But the work is only part done. Too many people lack justice, rights and material wellbeing (like the 1 billion people who do not have enough food to eat) and they must not be forgotten or written off. These challenges mean that it is imperative that we, in turn, keep challenging our assumptions and our theories of change about development. Because ideas, institutions and interests will rarely be aligned, we must be ready to advance human wellbeing when they are. This means building reimagining into our everyday work and into our professional relationships by investing in processes that support wild ideas, horizon scanning and reflective practice. For example, for IDS, the Reimagining Development process has led us to work with a major foundation in a new horizon scanning initiative. In the future, we must not confine reimagining to key moments, however important they may seem.

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