DEVELOPMENT STUDIES – PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

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Contents

Introduction: Development Studies – Past, Present and Future

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Abstract This introduction article provides a brief history of development studies, including its main challenges and critiques through the years. Based on this, we provide some thoughts on what the future of development studies might look like. There has been a certain continuity of themes in development, with certain ideas coming in and out of fashion. We expect to see more of this trend in the future. We are also hopeful about the necessary global view of development studies, as the Sustainable Development Goals have set the precedent for the move from the 'South' to global development goals. In this article we also provide a short summary of the nine articles in this *IDS Bulletin*, each tackling the history of a certain topic in development. We draw out the common themes of these development topics, providing complexity, nuance and challenge to existing paradigms.

The downtown handicraft market in Accra is bursting with small furniture and trinkets adorned with an ancient Akan symbol, the Sankofa, a bird whose neck is turned backwards and is reaching for an egg placed on its back. The bird represents the importance of looking back, and learning from the past in order to make the best of today as well as the future. One cannot imagine a more fitting lesson for development studies, itself a study of processes and transformations which still appreciates and engages with the nuances and traditions of the past. At 50 years old, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) is 'looking back, in order to look forward'. This *IDS Bulletin* tries to do just that, not only by tracing the history of certain topics in development studies, but also by bringing together two generations of scholars, Research Fellows and students, providing insight into our rich past and promising future.

Easily overlooked, the IDS PhD student is an interesting character. After being in a solitary world of reading and writing for one whole year, PhD students are then allowed to experience, observe and analyse the real world. The idea of this anniversary *IDS Bulletin* is the result of a mid-term meeting of PhD students with their PhD convenor, Jeremy Allouche. Eager to engage more fully with the wider Institute, the PhD students decided to take the initiative and envision an *IDS Bulletin* that

would bring together students and junior researchers with more senior IDS Research Fellows. The nine articles in this *IDS Bulletin* represent this collaboration,[1] forcing PhD students out of their shells, and making them think about the bigger picture: where has development studies got to today? Where has it come from? And what role has my tiny field of research played in this development of development studies?

Even older than the seemingly endless life of a PhD student is IDS itself! This year we celebrate its 50th Anniversary, and can reflect on how IDS has shaped and continues to shape many powerful ideas within development studies. Some of the key conceptual contributions include: redistribution with growth (Dudley Seers); urban bias (Michael Lipton); structural adjustment with a human face (Richard Jolly); participation (Robert Chambers); and gender and development (Kate Young, Naila Kabeer and others). More recently, programmes on trade and value chains, citizenship, governance, sustainable livelihoods, environmental change and health systems have challenged orthodoxies and thinking in development studies.

Development practitioners have also been another key aspect of IDS' reflexive engagement, with studies such as that by Chambers, Longhurst and Pacey (1981) who highlighted 'tarmac' and 'dry season' bias, where officials and experts tend to visit field sites at times of the most agreeable weather, thus overlooking the harsh environmental realities. In fact, right from the start IDS has been strong at challenging international development aid myths – one of the earliest issues of the *IDS Bulletin* calls into question how 'we' know what is good for 'them', as pointed out by Jolly (2008).[2]

Today, these IDS traditions continue in our vibrant work across many issues, as we continue to shape development agendas, policy and practice. These include issues around taxation; health and nutrition; gender and sexuality; conflict and violence; resource politics; green transformations; rural futures; and life in cities. We are also extending and connecting our longstanding expertise in state governance and citizen participation by exploring the emerging roles of popular politics, business and markets, and digital technologies in development.

1 Looking back

To have an *IDS Bulletin* on the history of certain ideas, methodologies and themes in development studies, particularly over the last 50 years and highlighting the role that IDS has played, is certainly an ambitious task. This is even more difficult as ideas in development theory and practice cannot be divorced from the broader assumptions, aspirations and beliefs of any age, whether it is the failures of state communism, capitalism and nationalism in the 'Age of Extremes' (Hobsbawm 1994) or today's post-capitalism (Mason 2016).

For us to think about the most influential ideas in development studies, we reflected on the history and meaning of development studies itself.

The dominant ideas on the nature and genesis of the very process of development have gone through a series of transformations. In the 1950s, for various political reasons, colonial powers were concerned with the economic progress of the previous colonies. Initially this concern was monopolised by economists and development economists, who had played a major role in the reconstruction of post-war Europe through the Marshall Plan. However, equating progress with economics became increasingly insufficient and limiting, and thus a new multidisciplinary branch of the social sciences was born: development studies.

The overall ideas and theories of development in the early days were in most cases rigid and linear, describing a technological, gendered and monetary evolutionist theory of development (Crewe and Harrison 1998). Whether in modernisation or Marxist theory, technology is seen as an engine of social change, progress and development. Pro-poor technology soon became associated with the idea of intermediate technology (as opposed to high or capital-intensive technology). This push for technological advancement has also led to a gendered bias in development theories and practice as technologies have been associated with men. Finally, economic power, money and materialism have been seen as the major pathway for development. Modernisation and Marxist theories of development became openly criticised after the Cold War, leading some theorists to question the relevance of development studies. In the words of Corbridge, it was 'hopelessly evolutionary, of being colonial in intent, of being masculinist, of being *dirigiste*, and of being a vehicle for depoliticisation and the extension of bureaucratic state power' (Corbridge 2007: 180). Development studies was reaching a postmodern identity crisis where ideas and concepts had lost any meaning, simply becoming empty buzzwords, leading some to argue that development studies have barely made it to the twenty-first century (Schuurman 2000).

There were, and are still, many uncertainties around the field of development studies. However, the debate has moved on, focusing more on the multidimensional aspects of development and its political nature, and the methodological challenges of being multi- and trans-disciplinary. While the multi-method approach to research provides a more holistic understanding of the topic at hand, some critics believe that the methods taken individually do not live up to the disciplinary standards.

2 Looking forward
So what does this very brief intellectual history tell us about looking forward? In some ways, the past influence of evolutionist linear thinking on development studies makes forward thinking a difficult and complex task. Perhaps the most fundamental lesson is that we are talking about a variety and diversity of futures rather than a single linear path. Looking forward could be done in several different ways: what are the new key concepts and ideas? What are the paradigms lost and regained? (This second question contrasts with the first one in that the novelty of these ideas is questioned.) Or finally, are we reaching a new critical juncture in relation to broader transformative changes?

Figure 1 Word cloud of core themes from 2014 European Conference on Development Studies

Source Authors' own.

Identifying the new concepts and ideas might seem straightforward. When talking to colleagues, concepts such as complexity, resilience and transformations are seen as the flavour of the day, with some endorsing them while others are openly criticising them. But this may reflect an institutional bias. Another method would be to look at the budget of key international development agencies and see their spending per sectoral theme. The Department for International Development (DFID), for example, has been moving towards allocating and reporting its expenditure by development policy priorities since 2011. Its five pillars were wealth creation; combating climate change; governance and security; the direct delivery of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and global partnerships. Of course, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be reflected in the new priorities post 2016. Interestingly, one can see from these priorities that global public goods and partnerships are clearly changing the development landscape priorities and that climate change, the private sector and security are core themes for DFID. Obviously, this is a very limited view of development, illustrating the old paradigm of development as technical aid. Another way to look at it is to analyse the key themes of recent development studies conferences. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the core themes in the 2014 European Conference on Development Studies and the upcoming 2016 UK Development Studies Association conference in Oxford, respectively.

It becomes obvious that finding a new trend of ideas in development is more difficult than expected. And in fact, these two word clouds show continuity, since words such as politics, power and class are coming back to the forefront. This leads us nicely to our second point.

A second way to think about the future of development is to think about development cycles and paradigms 'lost and regained'. Theories that were popular at the beginning of the twentieth century are being revisited, albeit with more analysis and empirical rigour. For example, with globalisation came the expansion of Western multinational

Figure 2 Word cloud of core themes from 2016 UK Development Studies Association conference in Oxford

Source Authors' own.

corporations, whose economic power and monopoly in developing countries revived an interest in dependency theory – the idea that rich countries make themselves richer at the expense of the poorer countries. Or more recently, the global financial crisis in 2007–08 was compared to the 1930 financial crisis, and hence one could see the strong return of Polanyi and his idea of Double Movement (1944) in social sciences and development studies.[3] These patterns make us wonder which lost paradigm, theory or concept may re-emerge in the imminent future.

Our third point is about our understanding and representation of the present era. In our view, this particular moment of time represents a critical juncture in development studies. These paradigm changes, as explained previously, will always be problematic if anchored in viewing development as a North–South issue. Throughout the years, the scope of development studies and development has expanded, and development is not only a concern of the previous colonies, but a global and universal process that aims to better the lives and living standards of people everywhere, as reflected in the SDGs. Of course this should not mean that development tools are applied in the same way universally (Hart 2001). In fact, as shown by many development anthropologists, the global diffusion of this 'regime of truth' of development is very much contested; it either becomes provincialised through cultural encounters (Subramanian 2009), or is localised (and not viewed as culturally foreign) (Pigg 1992). Overall, development, as an idea and practice, is produced and re-produced through existing categories, which it then transforms. International development entails social processes that are inevitably transnational, intercultural, and multi-scalar and involves the interaction and mediation of extensive actor networks, with different logics and world views.

This structural prejudiced framing of development as a North–South issue needs to be removed, and development studies needs to describe and explain social and structural differences that reach across the old

geographies of the so-called 'North' and 'South'. This paradigm shift is in line with the new universal SDGs, and the IDS strategy for 2015–20, both of which see development in the context of contradictions and complex, globally-interconnected challenges. Development needs to be reframed from narrowly tackling poverty and vulnerability, to navigating complex challenges in ways that reduce inequalities and build more sustainable, inclusive and secure futures for people and societies.

We need a universal framing of development that recognises these challenges as matters for everyone, everywhere, from London to Lagos, from South England to the sub-Sahara, and Brighton as well as Beijing.

3 A selection of topics in development

This *IDS Bulletin* brings together nine articles that at first glance seem unrelated. However, in the first place these articles all articulate the development of fields of research and policy in development studies – looking at how far we have come and what the future holds. In accordance to what we have mentioned earlier, the nine articles show that the paths that these topics in development have taken are far from linear. For example, the structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s and 1990s were quite a game changer for social protection and agricultural subsidy policies, but in more recent years we see a reversion to pre-structural adjustment policies that favour a more hands-on approach. Secondly, each of these articles speak to how topics in development studies have critically challenged the existing paradigms, particularly on expanding the focus of development from the 'South' to a universal approach. Thirdly, all of these articles have explored the intersectionality of different aspects to development, say the intersection of climate change and poverty, race and inequality, cities and violence. And finally, reflective of the multidisciplinary approach to development this *IDS Bulletin* presents a wide range of topics, from gender to urban violence to agriculture input subsidies, documenting how each of these have been tackled using a wide range of research tools, from ethnographies to econometric analysis.

In the first article, Richard Jolly and Ricardo Santos take a look at the colonial roots of development, documenting how it was initiated post-Second World War when developed countries tried to fight underdevelopment in the 'third world'. The belief that the policies and practices of the rich and powerful Western world can and should be applied elsewhere describes much of the thinking about development up to the present time. Wade (2004) and Chang (2002) were instrumental in changing this belief and contesting the idea that Western economic success was due to liberalised policies (the most convincing evidence was the success of the 'Asian Tigers'). Jolly and Santos provide an interesting narrative of IDS' role in these debates, particularly through Bienefeld (1992), Chambers (2008), Kabeer (2006), Lipton (1977), Seers (1967), Jolly (2008) and other researchers who have been or are currently Fellows at IDS.

While Jolly and Santos' article gives a great overview of the development discourse, the next three articles focus on the evolution of

certain development policies and practices: agricultural input subsidies, climate change policies and social protection. This is followed by four articles focusing on ideas in development: violence and cities, power, gender, and ethnicity. The last article critically discusses the use of Open Access research as a way to disseminate research, ideas and policy recommendations universally.

Tamahi Kato and Martin Greeley focus on a particular agricultural policy that has been popular in sub-Saharan Africa since the 1970s: subsidising agricultural inputs, such as fertiliser and seeds. The agricultural sector is significantly large in developing countries, and subsidies were seen as direct support to poorer farmers, a way to drive down high food prices, and a direct channel to poorer voters. However, the financial burden that subsidies placed on governments, in addition to qualitative evidence of elite capturing, left the policy community divided regarding subsidy programmes. While their popularity had dwindled by the 1990s, following the structural adjustment programmes of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, there has been a re-emergence of 'new and improved' input subsidy programmes since the 2000s. This article evaluates five new input subsidy programmes in Malawi, Zambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Tanzania. In addition, an in-depth analysis of an input subsidy programme in Tanzania is provided, courtesy of the PhD research of one of the co-authors, Tamahi Kato. This article summarises much needed evidence for the debate which has remained contentious throughout the history of development studies: are the efficiencies of free markets superior to the helping hand of the government through state-controlled policies?

The pertinence of climate change today is undeniable. Changing sea-levels and drastic changes to the climatic environment have become hard to ignore, and countries have recently pledged to reduce climate change at COP21.[4] However, the path to mitigating climate change is less clear. In an example of how development studies challenges existing world views, Rachel Godfrey-Wood and Lars Otto Naess warn us that the focus on adaptation to climate change should not mean that policymakers focus only on incremental treatments of the symptoms of climate change, but in fact a more drastic approach that tackles the root causes of climate change, and the intersectionality between climate change effects and vulnerability. This has resulted in the use of the term 'transformation', rather than adaptation and resilience, or even mitigation in the first place (Ribot 2011; Pelling, O'Brien and Matyas 2015; Tschakert *et al.* 2013; Bahadur and Tanner 2014). Despite the popularity of 'transformation' in academic circles, Godfrey-Wood and Naess argue that its operationalisation remains unclear, unless accompanied by a political and institutional change along the lines of Tschakert *et al.* (2013) and Feola (2015).

Social protection was originally a development policy applied in developed countries, taking the form of social security, unemployment benefits and pensions – all redistributive policies aiming to benefit

the population during times of hardship. Stephen Devereux and Ana Solórzano trace the development origins of social protection to the provision of insurance after income insecurity caused by structural adjustment programmes and other events such as war and famine. One of the most famous and researched social protection programmes is the Oportunidades in Mexico, which has provided grants since the late 1990s, conditional on children attending school and health clinic visits. The success of this programme saw the rise of conditional cash transfers around the developing world, and was seen as a major stepping-stone to trying to achieve the MDGs (Fiszbein, Kanbur and Yemtsov 2014). However, as summarised by Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2007), the popularity of such programmes led to a critical ideological debate: is social protection a human right, or is it a vehicle to help the poor manage risk? And if so, should social protection be conditional on certain indicators of 'good behaviour'? Devereux and Solórzano provide a fascinating and critical account of IDS' contribution to this debate, to the conceptualisation of social protection, to its implementation, and finally on how to evaluate its success.

Jaideep Gupte and Hadeer Elshafie explain that while IDS' contribution to the fields of cities and urbanisation is relatively sparse (albeit Michael Lipton's (1977) Urban Bias thesis), there is much scope for its development, particularly among a group of up-and-coming researchers at the Institute. DFID has recently described cities and urbanisation as the 'new frontier' for development (DFID 2010). More than half the world currently live in urban areas, and this is expected to increase to two thirds by 2050. In addition, the share of the poor living in urban areas is rising, at a much faster rate than the share in the population as a whole. These new statistics have forced development studies, and IDS, to rethink the urban bias thesis, and reconsider urban studies as an essential part of development. Recently, research has shown that violence is disproportionately located in urban areas (Buhaug and Urdal 2013), and disproportionately affects the urban poor and vulnerable (Justino 2007). Work at IDS has focused on this nexus between cities and violence, understanding how people adapt when exposed to violence as part of the everyday realities of urban life, from Kingston, Jamaica (Pearce, McGee and Wheeler 2011) to Maharashtra, India (Gupte, Justino and Tranchant 2014).

Today, power relations are recognised as embedded within development studies, bringing up crucial questions about power dynamics: who bestows power and who receives it? Who holds knowledge, who passes it on and to whom? And who has the agency? However, this reflective thinking has not always been an integral part of development. Looking back through old issues of the *IDS Bulletin*, Maro Pantazidou and John Gaventa find that the early references to power refer to economic capital or institutional systems of power, such as 'oil power' (Maull 1976) or a 'monopoly of power' (Brett 1987). However, this view was challenged towards the 1990s and a new approach to power emerged, which focuses on the experience and actions of the relatively powerless,

accounts for the power dynamics in complex social relationships, and recognises how knowledge production can contribute to and reflect those power relationships. The IDS approach to power led to a fundamental change in the development approach, advocating for participatory, rights-based approaches and empowering the disempowered. This work was pioneered by IDS Research Fellows Robert Chambers and John Gaventa, but currently permeates into all research and practice conducted at IDS, and is represented in IDS' commitment to transforming all types of inequalities and building inclusive societies.

The emergence of gender as an important factor in development can be partly attributed to a group of IDS Masters students who advocated for the appointment of Kate Young in 1977 as an IDS Gender Research Fellow. Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed and Jenny Edwards provide a fascinating account of how Kate Young struggled to claim her space even within IDS at the time. IDS has been at the forefront of gender issues and development since the 1980s, initiating the first Masters of Arts in Gender and Development jointly with the University of Sussex, and challenging male bias in the production of knowledge in development studies, which often led to gender-insensitive and dangerous development practices. The 2000s saw the emergence of sexuality and 'pleasure-based development', which challenges the hetero-normative development approach which excludes those who are already marginalised because of their sexuality. IDS has also recently started to shape the discourse around masculinities, calling for gender-sensitive analysis to the 'structural implications of male privilege' (Nesbitt-Ahmed and Edwards, this *IDS Bulletin*).

Ethnicity theory has evolved from its origins, which assumed ethnicity was a permanent fixture, to acknowledging the more fluid and dynamic role that ethnicity can play regarding self-identity and perceptions of others, and the agency individuals have in constructing their own ethnicity and identity. While the complexity and nuances of ethnic identity are now recognised, Naysan Adlparvar and Mariz Tadros argue for the importance of the intersectionality of ethnicity, and have highlighted some key contributions from IDS in terms of the interconnectedness of ethnicity with development policy, citizenship, violence, health and sexuality, volunteering and interethnic relations. The pertinence of ethnicity and interethnic relations and its influence on development outcomes and practices cannot be ignored, and there is still a need to further research this link.

Hani Morsi and Alison Norwood end this *IDS Bulletin* with an article on Open Access research, and its implications for development studies and the *IDS Bulletin* in particular. As some of the other articles in this *IDS Bulletin* have shown, the production of knowledge in development has profound implications for its practice. In particular, who has access to this knowledge? At the heart of IDS work is the bottom-up approach, and as researchers here we try to make the voices of the poor, marginalised and disempowered, heard. But that is only one step in the process. This knowledge should not be exclusive to those who

are comfortably situated within the libraries of their ivory towers, but readily available and accessible to everyone, particularly those who will be most affected by its concluding policies. In 2016 the *IDS Bulletin* became Open Access: its articles that challenge prevailing development discourses, advocate for inclusive policies and participatory approaches, and represent the nuances and complexities of different experiences and identities, are now free for all to access and use.

Notes

1 Some authors will have graduated by the time of publication. In addition, among the junior authors is an IDS Research Officer (although at the time of publication a Research Fellow), and an ex-Masters student.

2 While these are only a few snapshots of key intellectual contributions from the Institute, we urge readers who are interested to learn more to take a look at *A Short History of IDS: A Personal Reflection*, written by IDS Emeritus Fellow and contributor to this *IDS Bulletin*, Sir Richard Jolly (2008). Richard provides an excellent account of the history of IDS, one of the first institutes in the world dedicated to development studies, and the unique challenges it has faced throughout different British governments, changing world views and narratives, and global events, throughout standing as strong as it does today.

3 This idea of Double Movement refers to a dialectical process of marketisation and push for social protection against that marketisation.

4 The 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference, Paris.

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