

Introduction: Challenging Orthodoxies, Influencing Debates. The *IDS Bulletin* at 40

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What makes a classic *IDS Bulletin* article? Wandering through almost 40 years and 140 issues of the *IDS Bulletin*, some common features can be discerned. The most memorable *IDS Bulletin* articles challenge orthodoxy and present alternative perspectives on development issues. They also reflect the spirit of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) as both an eclectic bunch of opinionated individuals and a community of thinking – but not necessarily a unanimity of views – and showcase the various contributions of IDS and its partners to development thinking and practice. Almost as important as content is writing style. The most widely cited articles are accessible to a wide readership (they avoid technical jargon, even if they convey specialist knowledge), and they are written in a deceptively informal style – yet beneath the easy narrative and occasional polemical flourishes is an authority that comes from deep knowledge of the subject area, often inflected with an urgency driven by a conviction that *this matters!*

What's changed and what hasn't?

Martin Staniland set out the rationale for both IDS and the *Bulletin* in the editorial to Vol 1 No 1 in June 1968 (see page 7). The purpose of the *Bulletin* was to communicate IDS research findings and establish a dialogue 'with all engaged in the study and promotion of development.' Early issues included this frontispiece: 'The major aim of the *Bulletin* is to publish brief and direct – sometimes provocative – articles on themes of current importance to those concerned with problems of development: students, teachers, and above all, practitioners, the administrators and civil servants who rarely have much time to spare. Hence no scholarly reviews of the literature on the subjects broached, a minimum

of footnotes and compression of often complex arguments. Editorial policy must, therefore, be quite different from that of a professional journal. But despite these self-imposed limitations, the *Bulletin* tries to maintain rigorous standards of argument.'

Some contributors seized the invitation to provocation eagerly. In an early assault on behalf of political scientists, sociologists and anthropologists, Emanuel de Kadt (Vol 2 No 2, 1969) mischievously defined economists as 'persons whose preferred background predisposes them to approaching reality through the haze of abstract models...'. (Econometric analysis of time series data confirms our hypothesis that the economists at IDS and elsewhere survived this onslaught.) Also in the spirit of provoking debate, many *Bulletin* articles have posed deliberately rhetorical questions as their title: 'Is Famine Relief Irrelevant to Rural People?' (Alex de Waal, 1989); 'Are Economists Concerned with Power?' (Jean-Marie Baland and Jean-Philippe Platteau, 1993); 'Will Political Conditionality Work?' (Mark Robinson, 1993).

The early years of the *IDS Bulletin* were characterised by a penchant for passionate debate that has disappeared – but should perhaps be revived. In 1975 Ronald Dore presented 'Some Reflections on the Late Development Hypothesis' (Vol 6 No 3), only to have Susantha Goonatilake (an IDS Research Officer at the time) rebut his theory as 'imperialistic' and 'ethnocentric'. In the same issue, Dore replied, somewhat defensively: 'I do not assume, bless him, that England is the only source of the latest wisdom...'. Vol 7 No 2 (1976) was devoted to a debate on the influential World Bank/IDS study 'Redistribution with Growth' (RwG). Colin Leys challenged its political assumptions, arguing that

RwG ignored the structural determinants of poverty and replaced class analysis with 'arbitrarily defined target groups'. Richard Jolly riposted vigorously: 'It is not RwG which rules out radical change – it is rather Colin Leys who attempts to rule out serious consideration of what might be done to alleviate poverty and improve income distribution when radical change appears very unlikely.'

Here are four more things that have changed in the *Bulletin* over the years.

- Until relatively recently, summaries were included of each contribution in English, French and Spanish – in 1975 an article on the *coup d'état* in Chile was published in Spanish.
- Early *IDS Bulletins* included reviews of books and even films, including a review in 1976 of Satjavit Ray's film about the Bengal famine of 1943, *Distant Thunder*.
- Unthinkable today, an article from 1981 titled 'Women's Issues and Project Appraisal' had a photograph of bare-breasted African women above the caption: 'Women washing clothes in the Gambia. Here the Moslem women are not secluded!'
- The countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America where IDS does most of its work have been variously labelled at various times – 'underdeveloped countries', 'less-developed countries', 'developing countries', 'the Third World', 'the South'. (Raymond Aporthe, in a *Bulletin* article titled 'Distant Encounters of a Third Kind', asked in 1980: 'Is the "Third World", as it is commonly and distantly conceptualised and perceived "in the West", more an invention than a discovery?') A quarter of a century later, this discomfort around terminology has *not* changed.

The selection of articles reprinted in this special issue are not the 'best' *IDS Bulletin* contributions of all time, nor are they 'representative' of the diverse bodies of knowledge that IDS has contributed to building in its first 40 years. There will inevitably be much wailing and gnashing of teeth over the regrettable omissions. Where is Phil Daniels' classic 'Foreign Investment Revisited'? Or Margie Buchanan-Smith and Simon Maxwell's 'Linking Relief and Development'? What about Stephany Griffiths-Jones on the East Asian crisis? Robin Murray on London as a financial centre? James Manor on democratic decentralisation? Richard Longhurst on

rapid rural appraisal? John Humphrey and Hubert Schmitz on global value chains? If only space had permitted... Rather, the 16 articles that follow this introduction, selected from a much longer shortlist, exemplify the (overlapping) characteristics listed above, and structure our overview of them: challenging orthodoxies, quality of writing, and political engagement.¹

Challenging orthodoxies

One preoccupation that has permeated the *IDS Bulletin* from the start is a critical reflection on the nature of development studies itself, and of what, why and how 'development professionals' do what we do. The very first published article in Vol 1 No 1, 'From Colonial Economics to Development Studies' by Dudley Seers, emphasised the limitations of conventional economic theory in understanding development as more than 'government investment programmes' but instead as a combination of economic, social and political factors requiring 'a genuine fusion of disciplines' – a challenge to interdisciplinarity that persists to this day.

In 1980, Vol 11 No 3 explored the dilemmas of 'Teaching Development at Graduate Level in Britain'. (On the cover, bearded British men point at maps while African and Asian students look on, smiling sympathetically.) Dudley Seers' editorial noted that a 1964 conference in Manchester on this topic had focused on 'the subject itself' – specifically, which economic models were most appropriate to teach – but the 1980 conference at IDS broadened the discussion, not only arguing for 'plurality' in disciplinary approaches to teaching development studies but even asking 'what business we in Britain have teaching in this field?' This entire *IDS Bulletin* is worth revisiting by anyone teaching or studying development studies today: for John Toy's discussion of 'core or cafeteria?' approaches, for Colin Leys' thoughts on 'training' versus 'studying' development, and for John Oxenham's lively response to his own rhetorical inquiry: 'Should Development Studies Be Taught in Britain?' (see page 28).

Dudley Seers' agenda-setting article in Vol 1 No 1 also made the case early on for understanding development not in terms of 'us and them' but instead in terms of global interconnectedness: 'The development of development studies will, therefore, throw an increasing amount of light on our problems too.' In a 1977 *Bulletin*, provocatively titled 'Britain: A

Case for Development?', Richard Jolly and Robin Luckham (see page 14) argued that Britain in the mid-1970s displayed many features of 'underdevelopment' that were common in 'our Third World neighbours' – not least structural unemployment, high inflation and a balance of payments deficit that had recently prompted a humiliating intervention by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The recognition that poverty is global and is not confined to 'poor countries' would later be revisited in an *IDS Bulletin* in 1998 titled 'Poverty and Social Exclusion in North and South', edited by Simon Maxwell and Arjan de Haan.

In 1979, a *Bulletin* edited by Robert Chambers titled 'Rural Development: Whose Knowledge Counts?' made a powerful argument for taking 'indigenous technical knowledge' seriously, and laid the foundations for IDS work on participatory approaches during the 1980s ('it is pertinent to ask: who are the true professionals?'). In a later *Bulletin* on information, knowledge and power in development (Vol 25 No 2, 1994), Susanna Davies pursued this theme, asking 'What do "we" mean by knowledge about "them"?' and exploring 'How "we" use knowledge about "them" to inform public decision-making'. The time might be overdue for renewed self-reflection on these questions, given the dramatically altered funding arrangements under which development studies now function – more commissioned studies and advisory work in support of donor-defined agendas, less time and funding to pursue 'blue skies' thinking and speculative research interests.

Many *IDS Bulletins* over the years were the product of workshops or conferences, where IDS Fellows, other academics and practitioners engaged intensively on an issue for two or three days and distilled their deliberations into a series of articles. This highlights an important point about the *IDS Bulletin*, that it is the product of collective thinking rather than individual effort. For this reason too, many of the articles reprinted here are editorials, because these overviews define the intellectual terrain of a debate and synthesise thinking from several perspectives, often forcing the editors to step outside their own disciplinary framework and to see the world from the perspective of others.

A case in point is Bob Baulch's editorial to a 1996 *IDS Bulletin* on 'Poverty, Policy and Aid' (see page 82).

The much-cited 'pyramid of poverty concepts' from this article subverts the distinction often drawn between the 'economic' and 'social' dimensions of poverty, making a virtue out of the self-evident necessity for economists and non-economists to find merit in each other's approaches. A few years earlier, in 1989, Robert Chambers had edited a landmark *Bulletin* titled 'Vulnerability: How the Poor Cope' (see the editorial introduction on page 33), which is still widely quoted and continues to inform thinking on vulnerability and policy on social protection. From the same *Bulletin*, Jeremy Swift resolved a paradox in food security analysis – 'Why are Rural People Vulnerable to Famine? – in another highly influential article (see page 41). A final example of an *IDS Bulletin* questioning prevailing orthodoxy is provided by Mick Moore's introduction to a 1993 *Bulletin* titled 'Good Government?' (see page 50), which was 'sceptical and cautious' about the (then) emerging donor agenda around governance and political conditionality, and proposed some innovative 'lateral thinking' approaches instead.

Over the years, the *IDS Bulletin* has proudly maintained the position set out in the first editorial. It now occupies a unique place at the intersection between research, policy and practice. Rosalind Eyben, an IDS Fellow now but for many years a senior adviser at the Department for International Development (DFID), recalls how she used the *IDS Bulletin* in her work: 'The ones I recollect as making the most impact on me when I was in DFID ... and that I drew on heavily for internal advocacy on policy issues were the one on vulnerability and poverty [1989] ... and also one on states and markets [1993] that was brilliant at a time when late Thatcherite neo-classical economics still dominated bureaucratic thinking in the early 1990s ... Baulch on poverty I remember well using in 1996 in trying to get ODA [Overseas Development Administration] to prepare itself for the expected incoming Labour Government.'²

Quality of writing

Michael Lipton's think-piece 'Copperplating One's Navel' (see page 12), in a 1971 *Bulletin* on 'Population and Environment', is reprinted here not only because it embodies that spirit of challenging orthodoxies (even 'progressive' orthodoxies) that so often made the *IDS Bulletin* both stimulating and iconoclastic, but also because it is also a uniquely 'Liptonesque' piece of writing. This article would not have been

published in a mainstream academic journal, then or now, but it is an exhilarating read – ‘Economists state, with a frequency sometimes mistaken for evidence...’; ‘trendy notions of vicarious asceticism’; ‘the poor cannot afford to be pure’ – all within a single paragraph!

The *IDS Bulletin* has published some excellent writing by some excellent writers. To name just one, Gordon White published several masterly articles in the *Bulletin* that demonstrated intellectually rigorous scholarship, empirical insight and political passion. One candidate for inclusion here was his editorial to the 1984 *IDS Bulletin* on ‘Developmental States in East Asia’, co-authored with Robert Wade – an issue that anticipated later *IDS Bulletins* on the East Asian Crisis (1999) and ‘Asian Drivers’ (2006). Another candidate was ‘Towards a Political Analysis of Markets’ (1993). In the end, we settled on ‘Towards a Democratic Developmental State’ (1995; see page 60) – a beautifully written, eloquently argued exposition on the intellectual origins and limitations of the development orthodoxy of the mid-1990s, ‘according to which development can best be promoted through a market-friendly state presiding over a predominantly capitalist economy operating within the political “shell” of a liberal democratic polity.’

One of the most recent articles reproduced in this special issue is ‘Citizenship, Affiliation and Exclusion: Perspectives from the South’ by Naila Kabeer (2002; see page 91). Written in her typically fluent and erudite style, Kabeer’s review of ‘changing notions of citizenship’ starts in the city-states of ancient Greece and touches on the Enlightenment and the French Revolution before revealing how the British Empire impacted on experiences of citizenship in post-colonial Africa and Asia – an extraordinary historical and geographical scope which ends by sketching a research agenda towards the achievement of ‘inclusive citizenship’.

Humour makes even a dull topic a fun read. In his (far from dull) article on ‘That One Percent Aid Target’ (see page 8), Hans Singer wittily observed that international aid can be defined as ‘a *quid* without a *quo*’, but when aid is tied to commercial credit and trade contracts ‘the *quo* is often bigger than the *quid*!’ Titles can be humorous too. Third prize for wittiest article title goes to Michael Lipton, for ‘Copperplating One’s Navel’ (see above). Second prize goes to Martin

Greeley, for his ‘Measurement of Poverty and Poverty of Measurement’ (Vol 25 No 2, 1994), an economist’s defence of income-based concepts of poverty. First prize for both wittiest and pithiest title ever goes to Elizabeth Harrison, for her multi-sited ethnography of a fish-farming project, from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) headquarters in Rome to village-level in Zambia – the fabulously titled ‘Fish and Feminists’ (Vol 26 No 3, 1995).

Last but not least: political engagement

Some *IDS Bulletins* coalesced IDS engagement around a specific political agenda at a particular historical moment. An issue edited by Raphie Kaplinsky in 1994 epitomises this convergence of the academic and the political – of research and influence – that drives much of what IDS does and stands for. Titled ‘A Policy Agenda for Post-Apartheid South Africa’, this *Bulletin* represented an unprecedented collaboration between academics concerned with influencing progressive policy change in the new South Africa, and activists on the verge of power who were determined to ground their policies in technical rigour. Articles were authored by IDS Fellows, South African academics, African National Congress (ANC) advisers and trade unionists. They addressed such critical policy arenas as income redistribution, industrial strategy, agricultural restructuring, tax reform, foreign investment policy, and challenges facing education. Kaplinsky’s introduction (see page 57) is succinct but prescient: ‘the intensity of inequity and violence bequeathed by the past political dispensation will not subside easily... Nevertheless, there is room for a substantial departure from the old order...’.

Gender has featured as a central strand of IDS work since the 1970s, and four articles reprinted in this special issue directly address gender concerns. A conference at IDS in 1978 on ‘The Continuing Subordination of Women in the Development Process’ produced an *IDS Bulletin* with the same title, from which two contributions are extracted here – the editorial by Kate Young (see page 19), and Ann Whitehead’s ‘Some Preliminary Notes on the Subordination of Women’ (see page 24), which was cited as still highly influential today by several current IDS members. In 1994, another workshop at IDS produced an issue titled ‘Getting Institutions Right for Women in Development’. In her overview article (see page 71), Anne Marie Goetz undertakes ‘a gendered archaeology of institutions’, meticulously

elaborating how institutional structures, practices and agents combine to reproduce gender-discriminatory outcomes, and reaching a conclusion familiar to IDS work in other areas, that this problem is not amenable to technical solutions: 'in the end, it is a matter of political struggle'.

This special issue concludes with an article from a recent *IDS Bulletin* titled 'Repositioning Feminisms in Development' (which contains at least half a dozen candidates for inclusion here), that shows how far the *IDS Bulletin* has moved since the 1970s, when it was not uncommon for all authors in any particular

issue to be British, white and male. Written by Nandinee Banyopadhyay, an Indian researcher, together with 12 sex worker activists, 'Streetwalkers Show the Way' (see page 102) does exactly what its subtitle says: 'Reframing the Debate on Trafficking from Sex Workers' Perspective'. The starting point is not theories and models, but real-life stories and experiences, while the entry point for influencing policy is not technical advice to government ministers, but political activism with and on behalf of marginalised constituencies. Perhaps the streetwalkers of India have shown us one way that future *IDS Bulletins* might take?

Notes

1 As well as looking to the future of development studies, one of the aims of the IDS fortieth anniversary activities was to celebrate the Institute's past and our community, and we offer this special issue of the *IDS Bulletin* in this spirit. We started by asking IDS staff to give us their suggestions of which had been the most interesting, stimulating, influential or memorable *Bulletin* articles over the years. Reading through dozens of articles, we realised that one of the strengths and defining characteristics of the *IDS Bulletin* is the space it offers both for reflection on what we do and why, and to push the boundaries of thinking (in large part due to the collective way many issues are conceived of and written) – and this is reflected in our selection. We chose the

articles reprinted here according to the criteria listed in the first paragraph above (they are all challenging, thought-provoking, lively) and with due cognisance of the changing nature of the *Bulletin*, which increasingly draws in authors from across the wide IDS network of partners and collaborators, not just from within our building.

There were many articles on our long list which we considered but were unable to include for reasons of space. These will be published electronically on the archive page of the IDS website (www.ids.ac.uk/ids.bookshop/classics.html).

See 'Notes on Contributors' on page viii for an acknowledgement of everyone who helped us in compiling this special issue.

2 Personal communications dated 9 June 2006 and 25 July 2006.