Changes in global issues affect the discipline of Development Studies. To keep track of the evolving nature of Development Studies, EADI has compiled an interesting literature that addresses the changes and future of this discipline.

Name of article: The state of development studies: origins, evolution and prospects
Author: Bruce Currie-Alder
Published on 31 March 2016
Source: Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue canadienne d'études du développement
Url: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02255189.2016.1135788

In reviewing the evolution of development studies, this article identifies three distinct traditions in teaching and research on development studies: international, national and global. Scholars and practitioners also make critical choices regarding focus, scale and expertise. The nature of explanation has shifted from understanding historical change, to assessing policy interventions at a demonstrable level of causality. The field is dividing into parallel dialogues that view development as national (domestic well-being), global (cross-border interdependencies), or foreign (poverty hotspots abroad). Development studies needs to bridge these dialogues, by encouraging the use of mesolevel data (between the nation-state and households), adopting greater geographic precision and offering thick explanations of social change.

Name of article: Development Studies – Past, Present and Future
Author: Aghajanian A. and Allouche, J.
Published on 03-May-16
Source: IDS Bulletin 47.2
Url: http://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/development-studies-past-present-and-future

Each article in this IDS Bulletin speaks 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. They all explore the intersectionality of different aspects to development, say the intersection of climate
change and poverty, race and inequality, cities and violence. And also, reflective of the multidisciplinary approach to development in this issue, a wide range of topics are presented – 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.

Name of book: Contemporary concerns in development studies: perspectives from Tanzania and Zambia

Author: Rehema Kilonzo & Tiina Kontinen (eds)

Published in 2015

Source: Publications of the Department of Political and Economic Studies 23 (2015), Development Studies, University of Helsinki, Finland

Url: https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/154641/Contemporary%20concerns%20in%20development%20studies.pdf?sequence=1

The contemporary concerns in development studies in this volume are identified and discussed mainly by development scholars with first-hand experience of development. Too often, development studies publications present views of those who mainly research the development of others – the well-off European academics with strong views of what is relevant to the discipline in any chosen time. Partly to challenge this pattern, the themes and topics in this volume are chosen and mainly discussed by scholars, lecturers and doctoral candidates from tertiary institutions in Tanzania and Zambia.

Name of article: Whiter development studies? Reflections on its relationship with social policy

Author: James Copestake

Published in 2014

Source: Centre for Development Studies, University of Bath, Bath Papers in International Development and Wellbeing

url: http://www.bath.ac.uk/cds/publications/bpid36.pdf

The paper contributes to an ongoing conversation between Development Studies and Social Policy as academic fields, particularly in the UK. Defining DS as a distinctive knowledge lineages centred on critical analysis of diverse ideas and projects for advancing human wellbeing, I suggest that it has lost coherence and influence even as research into international development thrives.

Name of article: The Global Economic Crisis and Beyond: What Possible Future(s) for Development Studies?

Author: Sumner, A. Eur J Dev Res
The article outlines two possible stylised futures to trigger debate, respectively based on a widening or a narrowing of the scope of DS: A future DS with a broader scope via global perspectives on inter-connected development (a ‘one-world’ DS); and a future DS with a narrower scope via attention to the needs of the poorest countries or the poorest people (a ‘bottom billion’ DS).

Name of article: The Past, Present and Future of Development Studies
Author: Mogens Buch-Hansen & Laurids S. Lauridsen
Published on 24 September 2012

Development as a political goal came into being in the mid-twentieth century, and development studies as an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary field of enquiry has been around for 50 years or so. During this period, one can identify two 25-30-year periods, each of which has been characterised by what one may call mainstream, critical and counterpoint approaches to the study of development.

Name of article: Development Studies: Enduring Debates and Possible Trajectories
Author: Peter EvansBarbara Stallings
Published in 2016
Source: Journal of Studies in Comparative International Development Volume 51, Issue 1, pp 1–31

How should we understand current debates in development studies? More specifically, how should we understand the way in which these debates have been seen through the eyes of scholars from a range of disciplines who have been associated with Studies in Comparative International Development (SCID)? Building on an analysis of the distribution of topics, disciplines, and regions covered by articles in SCID over the past 50 years, this essay coveys a vision of development
studies as seen through the lens of SCID. The four articles that follow this one help us interrogate a series of substantive issues central to development studies and their interrelationships – democracy, inequality, and the effects of the international context. We also explore two topics not covered in the articles – the role of the state in the economy and broader aspects of the international context. We conclude by speculating on how these arenas of development studies might evolve in the future.

Name of article: Development studies research 1975-2014 in academic journal articles: the end of economics?

Author: Mike Thelwall and Sam Thelwall

Published in 2016

Source: University of Manchester School of Arts, Languages and Cultures


The field of development studies analyses causes and potential solutions for global poverty and inequality. Since the Second World War there have been major changes in theories about the root causes of global poverty and the strategies necessary to tackle it. This article views the history of development studies from the perspective of the role of economics during 1975-2014. A topic modelling analysis of published journal articles from Scopus suggests that there has been a relative decline in research that focuses on economics, and particularly for research concerned with firms and growth. In parallel, the analysis suggests that there has been a relatively slow increase in interest in the environment, a lack of scholarly interest in BRICS and dependency theory, and a relatively homogeneous treatment of gender issues.

Name of article: Aid and the symbiosis of global redistribution and development: Comparative historical lessons from two icons of development studies

Author: A.M. Fischer (Andrew Martín)

Published on 2016-04-19


Url: https://repub.eur.nl/pub/80053/

This study examines the question of aid effectiveness through a comparative historical analysis of the external financing constraints of two icons of development studies: South Korea and Brazil. The selection of these contrasting cases is based on a method of difference, designed to examine the predicaments of two countries attempting similar developmentalist strategies of sustained industrial policy through successive stages of industrialization, but with differences in amounts of aid supporting such strategies.
Development studies is an uneasy discipline. It has a relatively short history that is linked particularly to decolonisation and the rise of overseas aid. It is associated almost exclusively with certain geographical locations and a political economy of resource transfer, rather than with a particular body of knowledge or theory. It is thus founded on the very dichotomies it seeks to overcome – of North and South and the massive imbalances in access to resources that produce 'haves' and 'have-nots' in the knowledge economy. This article draws on discussions at the IDS40 Roundtables and conference to outline the key elements of a vision for the future role of development studies institutions which would begin to address these inequities and challenges.

Why continue to publish journal articles documenting climate change and the real mechanisms behind poverty and inequality, when one man's' derailed rhetoric can reject it with no further proof?

China has lifted a record number of people out of poverty, has had sustained levels of economic growth—at environmental and social costs—started a global economic and political rise and is developing effective responses to the global financial crisis. It
is making these transformations with institutions that continue to surprise international observers. An increasing number of studies have started to articulate the lessons from China’s development. This paper reviews the different interpretations of these lessons, and the process of lesson learning, and the question what China’s dramatic transformations over the last 30 years imply for development studies and practice.

Name of article: Development
Author: Rob B. Potter, Dennis Conway
Published on 6 MAR 2017
Source: The International Encyclopedia of Geography

Development is a core concept in the social sciences that often frames debates, policies, and critical perspectives related to social, economic, and political change and human–environment relations in the Global South and North. This entry provides an analytical overview of the evolving nature of the cross-disciplinary field(s) of development studies from their beginning in the 1940s to the present. It reviews both mainstream theories and the plethora of alternative development theories and models that have been forwarded, practiced, criticized, discarded, and replaced in the past half century. The evolution of the field of development geography/studies reflects numerous changes and transformations in the ways and means through which socioeconomic progress might be achieved – good, bad, better, progressive, and radical. A particular challenge in the current era relates to the impress of neoliberal ideologies and their inability to address pressing questions of inequality – within and between Northern and Southern contexts.

Name of article: Taking Natural Limits Seriously: Implications for Development Studies and the Environment
Author: Bhaskar Vira
Published on 19 June 2015
Source: Development And Change Virtual Issues

This article explores how thinking about ecological limits, thresholds and boundaries has evolved in the last few decades, and explores the analytical and political possibilities that emerge if development studies scholars engage with these ideas. It
makes the case for an engaged political economy approach, which focuses on understanding how finite resources at a variety of scales are shared between the competing claims of different groups in society. The article suggests that, while the science of planetary limits is important, the most significant societal challenges are not about how close we are to the limits, but involve finding mechanisms to reconcile the difficult trade-offs that inevitably arise when we consider alternative human pathways in the present and the future. Choices are ubiquitous, even when there may be no immediate ecological tipping point, and a political economy perspective focuses on the ways in which humanity prioritizes different, often irreconcilable, objectives and interests in relation to the environment. The productive consequence of this thinking for development studies is the need for a renewed focus on the key issues that define prosperity and well-being, as well as the political and moral economy within which human society governs itself, and its relationships with nature.

Name of article: Critique, Rediscovery and Revival in Development Studies

Author: Murat Arsel, Anirban Dasgupta

Published on 14 July 2015

Source: Development And Change Virtual Issues


This article acts as the Introduction to the Debate that follows. It contends that the so-called impasse in development has been a constant feature of the field and is an indicator of its self-critical outlook rather than any deep-seated existential crisis. It unpacks the various dimensions of ongoing debate regarding the future of development studies, probing its policy relevance and legitimacy, interdisciplinarity, geographic focus and relationship with post-structuralist and Marxist thought. In order to revive and reorient the field in line with the contemporary world, the article proposes to return to an explicit Marxist/Marxian political economy framework to analyse the dynamics of capitalism in its local, national and global dimensions. Such a move would entail turning away from the increasingly dominant approach of critique for the sake of critique. Instead, the article argues that development studies can only fulfil its mission if scholars keep the goal of emancipatory development and change in mind when they engage with contemporary capitalist processes.

Name of article: Water Under Troubled Bridge: The (Ir)relevance of Development Studies Pedagogies in African Universities

Author: Jonathan Makuwira

Published on 18 August 2016

Source: Inaugural Lecture Presented to the Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
While development studies as a field of study in African universities continues to gather pace; and the need to decolonise the field in order to reflect African ideals, the question of relevance has created a new layer of critical inquiry.

Name of article: Decolonising development studies: reflections on critical pedagogies in action
Author: Jonathan Langdon
Published on 30 Sep 2013
Source: Taylor and Francis online


Building on the author's previous arguments that beginnings and framing matter in pedagogy, this article calls for a continuation of the decolonisation project that accompanied the emergence of development studies. Both the material and the discursive sides of decolonisation need to be addressed. This means not only destabilising Eurocentric conceptual frameworks, but also actively contesting the continued colonisation and inequity in university programs and campuses. Among the pedagogic approaches suggested are the inclusion of marginalised and indigenous voices in course materials, questioning the Eurocentric norms educators and students may hold, and consciously blurring the line between activism and scholarship.

Name of article: Top development studies journals dominated by Northern scholars
Author: Piotrowski, J
Published on 03 July 2014
Source: scidev.net


Fewer than 15 per cent of papers in the ten surveyed journals were at least partly written by authors based in developing nations, while some editorial boards consisted entirely of Northern representatives, according to a study presented at the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes in Bonn, Germany, last week (23-26 June).