

Introduction: A Manifesto for Oxford Development Studies

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This is the first issue of *Oxford Development Studies* which replaces *Oxford Agrarian Studies*. The new journal will have much in common with its predecessor; it will continue to publish material on agrarian studies with a focus on developing countries and will continue to be interdisciplinary. But its sphere of interest will extend to more general development issues. Our aim is to produce a journal which incorporates a wide range of approaches, as well as disciplines, and which gives space to both orthodox and unorthodox analyses and the debates between them. We shall encompass both theoretical and empirical material. We hope that articles will be presented with clarity and conviction, using the tools appropriate to the context.

The Scope of Development Studies

Development studies is an inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary enquiry into change and social and economic transformation in less developed parts of the world; attempts by states to define themselves, to order their societies along their own principles, to regulate and control the shape and order of change; the attempts by people and institutions to engage with, ignore or resist processes of transformation; their struggles to modify or preserve their physical environments; and to give purpose and meaning to changes they experience; and the impact of forces for change on the economy, institutions and people at every level of society.

Every element of development studies is subject to controversy: the meaning of development; the scope of the inter-disciplinary project; the geographical coverage; the nature and possibility of inter-disciplinarity; the tension between enquiry into social processes and enquiry into managed change; the tension between analysis and prescription.

The definition of development has been dominated by economists whose enquiry has been centrally concerned with growth. More recently, human and social development have been distinguished from economic development, with progress being judged by success in these dimensions, while there are those who would define development in terms of the emergence of democratic political and bureaucratic accountability, the triumph of law over custom, the quest for sustainability in the exploitation of resources, the emancipation of women, or a society's evolving capacity to handle more than one system of public ethics. Whatever the meaning of development, and whether or not it is perceived as goal-oriented, it is an historical process.

The scope of the subject involves two kinds of interrelated enquiry: one into social processes, the other into managed change. The study of social processes ranges from the relationships between societies and the physical and biological environment to analysis of ideas about change. The study of managed change may be historical or it may be prescriptive. The prescriptive territory is prominent in contemporary development studies, and is politically controversial.

The geographical coverage of development studies is variously defined in terms of poverty; lack of industrialization; those states which experienced colonialism; recipients of international aid; states which have been non-aligned in international politics; and regions of the capitalist periphery. All these criteria divide the globe differently but there is a large core of countries which are identified by all of them. These criteria also draw attention to international relations

of trade, finance, migration and aid, the globalization of ideas, technology and information and environmental impacts. They thus invite study of change in the advanced world with which change in developing countries is connected and of global institutions.

Since all disciplines are symbolic systems, inter-disciplinarity has been attempted in a variety of ways: the theory of one discipline may be applied to the empirical territory of another (e.g. health economics, the new political economy, the new home economics); or different empirical territories may be fused (e.g. nutritional sociology). The integration of theoretical territories is rare but may be found in institutional economics, some political economy and anthropology. Development studies is essentially multi-disciplinary, seeking to bring together the contributions of economics, sociology and politics and other disciplines to the understanding of development.

At the core of development studies is a comparativist critique of ideas and theories about change and the management of change, a critique which leads in turn to the development of ideas, theories and practice.

A Critical Approach

Recent intellectual and political developments have tended to restrict theoretical models and policy choices. The immediate impact of the end of the Cold War was, it appeared, to vindicate the market model of development, exposing socialist alternatives as inefficient and rendering them obsolete. These political changes reflect and have been reflected in intellectual changes. In economic analysis, applied to both developed and developing countries, Marxist and Keynesian systems of thought have been largely displaced by the neo-classical model of economic thinking. Theories grounded in neo-classical economics have also invaded the territory of other disciplines, notably sociology and politics. Reactions to this tendency in economics are beginning to generate new avenues of thought. In other disciplines post-modern analysis has sought to give voice to the disempowered, to eschew the privileging of any single paradigm and to deconstruct development discourse. Yet dominant thinking has severely reduced social, economic and intellectual choices leading to a single view of what constitutes a successful model of development and a single perspective on the analysis of many issues.

We believe that this tunnelling of choices into one mould is incorrect both as a view of the actual alternative countries face and of methods of analysis, while it can severely distort the process of thought about development issues. In this journal we shall therefore put special emphasis on presenting a critique of orthodox models and seeking alternatives both theoretically and empirically. Frequently, when analysis of development issues is confined to economics alone, assumptions are incorrect and conclusions naive. It is intended to explore and develop intellectual alternatives from multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary perspectives in this journal. We shall also publish articles written from the perspective of a single discipline, reflecting the way most research work is organized. We hope that the articles will have a firm empirical base. We shall welcome both macro- and micro-perspective encompassing evidence and thought from all the regions of the world.

If the journal has a single philosophy it is one of questioning and criticism. Said summarized the position we take extremely well in his Reith lectures in 1993: "The central fact for me is, I think, that the intellectual is endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, a philosophy or opinion... And this role has an edge to it, and cannot be played without a sense of being someone whose place it is to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them), to be someone who

cannot easily be coopted by government or corporations and whose *raison d'être* is to represent all those people and issues who are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug.” (Edward Said, Reith Lectures, June 1993)