

The Graduate Institute, Geneva

International Development Policy | Revue internationale de politique de développement

FR EN

8.1 | 2017

Articles 8.1

Articles

Towards a Renewed Vision of Development Studies

JOOST MÖNKES, GILLES CARBONNIER, AUDE MELLET AND LEO
DE HAAN

Abstract

This paper is intended as a contribution to the ongoing debate on the future of international development studies. It presents the outcome of a multi-site consultation process on the understanding and evolution of international development studies in Europe and emerging economies. Starting from a first 'Vision Paper on Development Studies', released in 2005, the authors examine how the global development landscape and the interdisciplinary field of development research and education have evolved. Based on an analysis of publications in the field of development studies, journal impact factors, and perceptions from scholars involved in research and teaching, the authors advance an updated 'Vision' that takes into account how the field is viewed and takes shape not only in the West, but also in China and in South Africa. While some of the basic tenets of development studies seem to hold firm, major shifts in global development and academic landscapes may give rise to important reconfigurations. On the one hand, the field of development studies is vibrant and growing. On the other, its expanding scope may end up challenging its very identity.

Index terms

Thematic keywords : development studies, development theories, impact factor, interdisciplinarity, international studies, South–South cooperation, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Full text



[Full size image](#)

The authors thank all those involved in the consultations and review processes that led to this paper. We wish to thank in particular the EADI directors and executive committee members as well as Dennis Rodgers, Andy Sumner, Wang Xinsong, Jacques Forster, Hans Opschoor, Michel Carton, Christophe Gironde and Lee Mizell for their valuable inputs and remarks on earlier drafts. We are also grateful to Waiyee Leong for her helpful research assistance at an early stage of the project.

1. Setting the Scene

¹ The European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) released its first Vision Paper on Development Studies in 2005 (Opschoor et al., 2005). In the wake of the so-called Bologna Process, which promoted greater harmonisation within the European higher education area, the Vision Paper primarily adopted a Eurocentric perspective on development studies. Ten years later, the international consultation process that would lead to the drafting of an updated Vision Paper was launched, again under EADI's aegis. This time, the emphasis has been put on perspectives from emerging economies and developing countries. The authors have been closely associated with this process and shared the objective of questioning existing paradigms in development studies (DS) education and research. This paper presents key outcomes of this consultation process and aims to feed into further debates.¹ It does not have the ambition of providing a comprehensive overview of the field of development studies across the world or even in the countries considered. Instead, it seeks to highlight trends and emphasise critical questions that arise on the nature of—and approach to—international development studies.

² Although development studies' origins can be traced back to colonial times (see e.g. Sumner and Tribe, 2008a), it expanded as an interdisciplinary field of research and education in the aftermath of World War II. The field thus developed in an international development landscape that was largely shaped by the Cold War, decolonisation, and a growing development aid enterprise (see e.g. Myrdal, 1996). In this context, DS evolved as an 'asymmetric business' largely dominated by Northern social scientists who were studying the South.² It was not rare for Northern researchers to spend years as expatriates carrying out field research. Northern

experts and organisations were supposed to have the knowledge, technology and means to help the so-called underdeveloped world catch up with the industrialised one. In sum, the DS field was characterised by a divide between a Western scholarly community and that community's object of study—that is to say, the South, which was facing 'development problems'. For their part, Southern students were coming to European and North American universities to study the development issues facing their own countries. This was facilitated by more or less generous scholarships,³ which were part of technical cooperation programmes offered by donor countries.

3 In 1975, several European academic institutions established the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI). The objective was to promote quality in research and education in the field of international development, as well as to disseminate development research findings to the public. Thirty years later, EADI attempted to take stock of the DS field and adopted the first Vision Paper on Development Studies, mentioned above. This 2005 Vision Paper (Opschoor et al., 2005)—which reflected primarily a European vision of DS—served as a reference for the accreditation of DS programmes in European universities in the framework of the Bologna Agreement. The Vision Paper defined DS mainly as:

- A multi- and inter-disciplinary field of study that seeks to understand social, economic, political, technological and cultural aspects of societal change, particularly in developing countries.'
- A field of study embedded in normative and policy concerns that aims to 'contribute to possible solutions to societal problems that development or its absence may produce.'
- A field of study that is not only context sensitive, but that keeps evolving in parallel to transformations in the global development landscape, involving an increasing range of topics.

4 The Vision Paper was elaborated early in the new millennium and the global development landscape has undergone dramatic shifts since. Suffice to mention the spread of geo-referenced and 'big' data, or the expansion from the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is somewhat reflected in a parallel expansion of the breadth of issues addressed by international development scholars. Another major shift relates to the rapidly growing influence of emerging economies in global governance and international development policy debates. As the act of transposing Western-inspired models and recipes to the South has been increasingly called into question, other development experiences, such as the recent Chinese 'success story', have attracted keen interest from other parts of the developing world. International development has also expanded as a field of research and education in emerging economies such as Brazil, China and South Africa. In parallel, the global public goods agenda reflects the fact that development concerns such as environmental degradation, climate change, security, global health, poverty and inequality have become universal. This was further reinforced by the adoption of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, which for instance requires all countries including advanced economies to shift towards more sustainable production and consumption patterns and to cut by half the share of people affected by poverty as nationally defined. As a result, one may wonder to what extent these trends may end up diluting the identity of international development studies as an education and research field bringing together specific epistemic communities.

5 The binary concepts that have underpinned the dominant DS narrative—developed/developing, rich/poor, North/South, donors/recipients—are increasingly inoperable in analytical terms. It is in this context that an update of the 2005 Vision Paper on DS was spearheaded by EADI in collaboration with the

International Institute of Social Studies (The Hague), the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (Geneva) and the NORRAG Network for international policies and cooperation in education and training. The process involved surveys, individual interviews, ad hoc consultations and regular exchanges with partners not only in Europe and North America, but also in China, South Africa and other emerging economies.

- 6 This paper presents the outcome of this process and aims to feed into further debates. The next section provides a bibliometric analysis of how publications in the DS field have evolved. Sections 3 and 4 examine facts and perceptions regarding the evolution of the DS field in China, South Africa and Europe in particular. Section 5 focuses on the most critical issues that have emerged from this research and consultation process. Section 6 concludes and outlines a 'renewed vision' of development studies.

2. Is the Field of Development Studies Thriving or Declining?

- 7 Looking at global scientific publishing as a whole—beyond the DS field alone—the total volume of publications has tripled over the past three decades (SNSF – Swiss Academies, 2016). Based on data from Thomson Reuters' Science Citation Index (SCI), Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) and Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI), it appears that the overwhelming dominance of the West has eroded, most notably in the face of the remarkable rise of Asia: the proportion of articles involving researchers from Asian-based institutions has tripled over the same period, reaching 21 per cent of total scientific publishing in 2015 (SNSF – Swiss Academies, 2016). Over the same period, the share from North America dropped by more than 10 percentage points. In terms of impact however, research produced in emerging economies remains below average, but is rising fast, notably in the case of China (SNSF – Swiss Academies, 2016).⁴

- 8 In this context, how has the DS field evolved? Tracking the evolution of publications in the field, we start by comparing the catalogues of six major English-language social science publishers between 2000 and 2015. We then look at the evolution of the impact factors of peer-reviewed journals in both DS and neighbouring fields between 2000 and 2015.

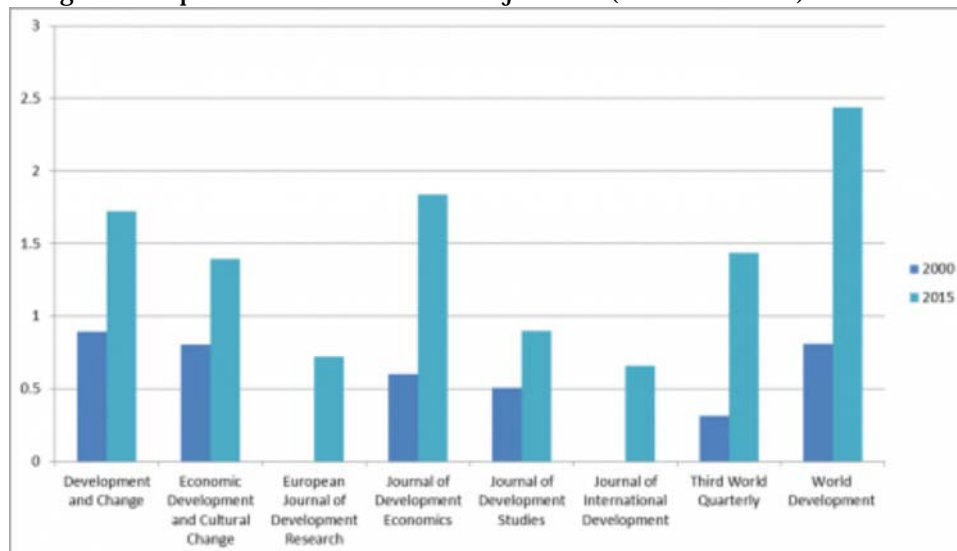
- 9 Reviewing the titles categorised as development-related in the online catalogues of Columbia University Press, Cambridge University Press, Edward Elgar, Palgrave, Routledge, and Oxford University Press, we compare the relevant literature published in 2000 to that published in 2015, including monographs, research collections, series and handbooks.⁵ The quantity of development-indexed publications increased more than eightfold over the period, from 62 in 2000 to 549 in 2015. Looking at these publications by discipline, field of study, topic and region on the basis of their titles and short synopses highlights the predominance of development economics or titles dealing with economic issues, in both 2000 and 2015. That said, an increasing number of titles deal with other disciplines, including political science, geography and anthropology. The region most often referred to is Asia, followed by Africa. There is a proliferation of themes, with an increasing number of publications dealing with topics that were much less prevalent in 2000 as compared with 2015. This is, for instance, the case for global health, technological innovation, impact evaluation, water and sanitation, disaster, tourism, and religion.⁶ In the same vein, some topics have gained momentum—namely, governance, climate change, sustainable development, globalisation, and cities/urban space (see Annex 1 for more details). While the flourishing of DS literature can be interpreted as an indication of a thriving field of study, it can also be seen as a challenging sign that DS

spreads out in a multiplicity of directions, begging the question as to what holds DS together and what its boundaries are as a specific field of research and education, as discussed in Sections 5 and 6.

Broadening this perspective, we also note an increase in relevant publications when looking at the catalogues of non-strictly academic and yet influential publishers in the DS space, some of which pursue an advocacy-oriented agenda. Considering ZED ('Development'), Pluto Press ('Development Studies') and Verso (no development-related category), as well as Hurst ('Development'),⁷ the number of relevant indexed titles increased from just ten titles in 2000 to thirty-one in 2015. There has also been a rise in the number of popular blockbuster titles released by mainstream commercial publishers, authored by figures such as Ha-Joon Chang, Chimamanda Ngozi, Bill Easterly, Katherine Boo or Mike Davis, not to mention the success of development-related movies by film-makers such as Danny Boyle (*Slumdog Millionaire*) or Hubert Sauper (*Darwin's Nightmare*).⁸

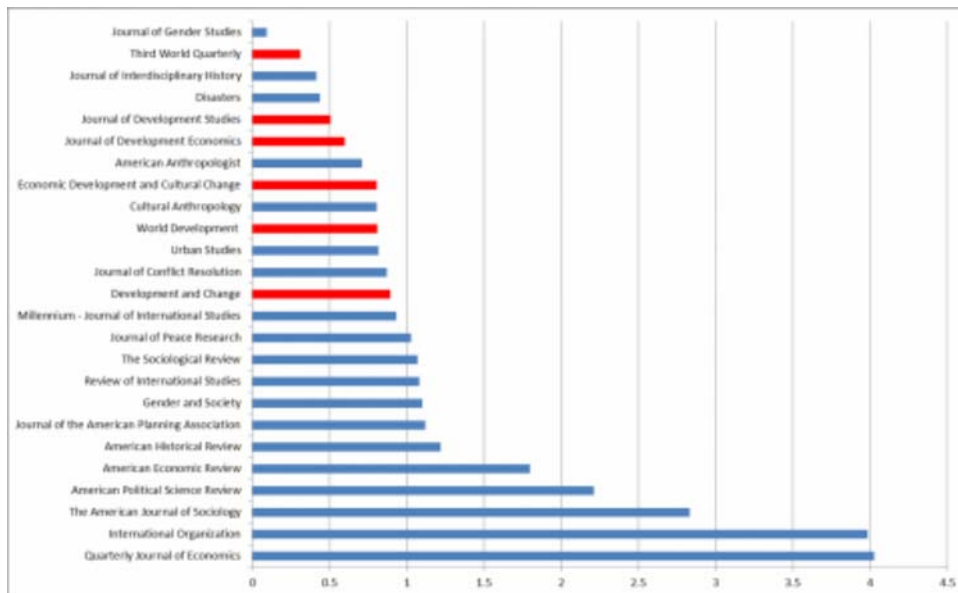
Turning to the evolution of impact factors (IFs) for a selection of development-related journals, we see a notable increase in IFs for six comparators between the two reference years. Figure 1 shows that IFs are available for eight journals in 2015 compared to six in 2000.

Figure 1: Impact factors for selected DS journals (2000 and 2015)



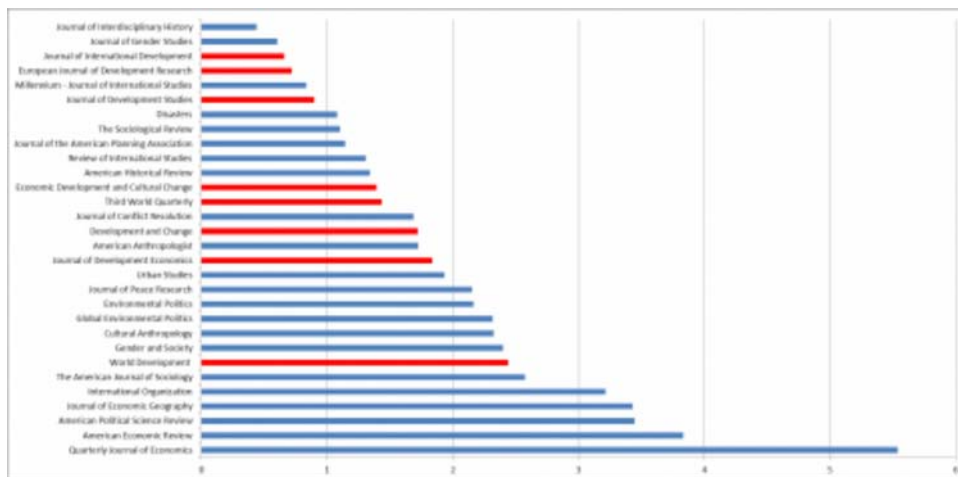
We then compare IF data for journals in the DS field to a selection of journals in connected disciplines and fields of study; the results are shown in Figures 2 and 3. In both reference years, DS journals (indicated by red bars) represent about a quarter of the total, but there is a higher number of journals in 2015 as more of them had an impact factor.⁹

Figure 2: Impact factors for selected journals in the DS and connected fields (2000)



Source: Authors' elaboration based on data retrieved from Thomson Reuters (2016).

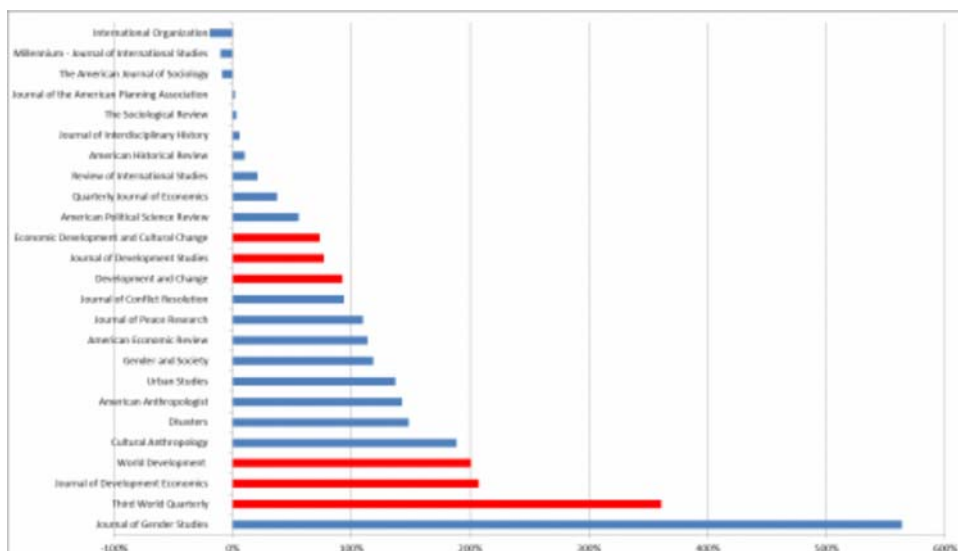
Figure 3: Impact factors for selected journals in the DS and connected fields (2015)



Source: Authors' elaboration based on data retrieved from Thomson Reuters (2016).

- 14 Illustrating the relative increase in IFs between 2000 and 2015, Figure 4 shows that DS journals do relatively well in this regard, which tends to support the argument that DS as a research field is mustering increasing interest.

Figure 4: Impact factor percentage increase between 2000 and 2015—only for journals with data available for both years¹⁰



- 15 This brief inventory is obviously partial and incomplete. It is restricted to a few journals in English and should be complemented with an analysis of publications in other languages. It further calls for the inclusion of additional reference years and journals, and an extended analysis of the evolution of authors' institutional affiliations and location to identify further trends such as the rise of publications (co-) authored by researchers from the South.

3. DS in Emerging Economies—The Cases of South Africa and China

- 16 Sections 3 and 4 present information and data collected through questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and rounds of consultations with key informants involved in research and education in the field of DS, notably in South Africa, China and across Europe.
- 17 In the case of South Africa, we held meetings in Johannesburg (March 2015) and Stellenbosch (September 2015) with non-representative samples of South African development scientists.¹¹ It appears that DS in South Africa is perceived to be very much alive. Informants were unanimous in reporting that DS has a large constituency—both in government and in society. Students easily find employment and are considered agents of social change. Because of its location and leading role in the continent, South Africa attracts many students from the rest of Africa, who apply to follow the various DS programmes that are offered many of the country's universities. Typical DS students want to make a difference in the policy world and in practice, and take an activist stand when it comes to their contribution to society. The South African Development Studies Association (SADSA) gave a major impetus to the recognition of DS as an academic field of study during the latest review process regarding South African higher education and the subsequent establishment of the Higher Education Qualification Framework (South African Council on Higher Education, 2013).
- 18 The viability of DS appears to be largely driven by the South African government and its self-ascribed mission of being a developmental state. Whether or not the state can be considered 'developmental' is at times a matter of heated debate, mirroring the centrality of development debates in South Africa. An important ongoing debate on DS relates to the necessity of decolonising knowledge and giving space to African indigenous knowledge. Issues like 'whose development are we talking about', 'which powers dominate knowledge on development' and 'how to break out of this domination' are mentioned as recurrent priorities. In other words, many scholars and researchers involved in DS in South Africa—or South African DS—have started to question and criticise the geography of knowledge production and many concepts of modernity originating in the North. The presumed necessity of industrialisation is one such 'received Northern development wisdom' that is challenged. Instead, local knowledge and contexts are emphasised and new knowledge ecologies originating in the South are emerging. It is worth noting that this is echoed by Brazilian and other Latin American scholars, who have also highlighted the need for challenging the predominantly Northern origin of DS, emphasising contributions from leading Latin American scholars and policymakers, not only those of the *Dependistas* in the 1960–70s, but also—in more recent years—those of the proponents of *buen vivir* ('good life'), a concept interpreted in a variety of ways (Gudynas, 2011).
- 19 In the case of China, the authors of this paper held focus group meetings at Tsinghua University and Beijing Normal University (BNU) in May 2015 and organised a conference on the topic at Peking University in May 2016. Chinese

scholars highlighted that studying development is nothing new in the Chinese context. The origin of development economics in China can be traced back, according to some scholars, to as early as 1945 with the work of Professor Pei-Kan Chang as well as to area studies in the early 1960s with the setting up of a series of institutes specialising in different developing regions in the world, such as the Afro-Asian Institute established at Peking University in 1963.

20 DS in China re-emerged more recently under the impetus of a growing demand for studying China's recent development trajectory—that is to say, China's experience over the past three decades. Indeed, the approach in a number of Chinese DS programmes, geared in particular to international students, starts from the concrete experience of China itself, offering a recent 'successful developing country' case study, which can be a source of inspiration for less advanced developing countries. There is much talk of the 'Beijing consensus' on development in contrast to the (post-) 'Washington Consensus'. In other words, the Chinese experience offers an alternative perspective to mainstream pathways to development that have been advocated by the West over the past decades. It further helps support the view that there is no single recipe and that context matters. As argued by one of the Chinese experts during a 2015 focus group discussion: 'Development cannot rely on old, aid-related paradigms nor on simple solutions; indeed, we are entering a new global era in which we must question the very meanings of "development", where and for whom it matters, and who should do what to support it.'

21 In China, DS is widely seen as gaining traction even if it is not (yet) formally acknowledged as an independent field by the Ministry of Education. That said, DS-related curricula are being increasingly integrated into economics, history and cultural studies programmes in several Chinese universities. With China (re-) emerging as a major international development player, the demand for DS is likely to grow substantially in the near future, as can already be seen in mounting interest from students from other developing countries and from the West who apply to join DS programmes in China. The same might apply to Chinese students who wish to prepare for a career within the framework of South–South cooperation or 'China going abroad'. Several interviewees noted that DS programmes in Chinese universities still often emulate existing DS programmes from the West, which is not a surprise given that many of the Chinese faculty members involved have had training in the West. Exploring how best to integrate the 'Chinese experience' into curricula is likely to be a prolonged process that deserves further research.

4. Evolving Perceptions in Europe

22 In Europe, the consultation process encompassed three phases: (i) a questionnaire sent to EADI Executive Committee members and Working Group convenors,¹² (ii) discussions on a draft revised Vision Paper at the EADI Directors' Meeting in the Czech Republic in October 2015¹³ and (iii) written feedback received thereafter.¹⁴ The ensuing picture appears contrasted. While the DS field is reportedly vibrant in several countries, which are witnessing an increase in the number of students applying to and enrolled in DS study programmes (notably the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland), DS is emerging as a relatively new field in part of eastern Europe (notably the Czech Republic and Poland) while the trend is rather a relative decline in other countries, such as Italy, Spain and Norway. There is some correlation with similar trends regarding fluctuations in those countries' levels of official development assistance (ODA). The latter may impact the financial resources available in support of DS research and education (notably scholarships) as well as students' expectations regarding post-graduation job opportunities.

23 Our consultations highlighted a growing tension between the imperative of

disciplinary excellence prevailing in academia and that of the interdisciplinarity required to approach complex global development issues. The same applies to the need for in-depth theoretical grounding and methodological sophistication vis-à-vis increasing student demand for practical and ‘soft’ skills as well as applied knowledge. Many interviewees underscored the opportunity to clarify DS’s epistemological foundations and methodological specificities. The consultations underscored tensions and disagreement within the field of DS itself, for example between orthodox/mainstream development studies that seek to bring ‘solutions to development problems’ and more critical development studies streams that question the very meaning of development and the politics underlying the development enterprise as well as the space given to varied knowledge ecologies from the South. Another bone of contention is how normative or policy relevant the DS field should be.

24 Research funding exerts an obvious influence in this regard. The questionnaires filled in by European academics active in the DS field highlight that funding emphasises research that produces policy-relevant findings that are practical and ‘usable’ in the short run. More generally, interviewees report a general reduction in funding, which tends to be more clearly earmarked in line with political priorities (e.g. counterterrorism and ‘deradicalisation’, technological innovations and job creation). This does not however seem to lead to a narrowing down of the DS field. On the contrary—and echoing our inventory of emerging themes in DS publications—interviewees in Europe identified a number of relatively new and increasingly important teaching and research topics, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Emerging topics in the field of development studies

Topics highlighted	
Students’ expectations and interests	Environment/climate, security/conflict/peace, private sector, emerging economies/BRICS. Excellence in education, professional skills, theoretical grounding.
New curricula and thematic areas	Climate, security/conflict, terrorism and organised crime, human rights. BRICS, globalisation, international cooperation, political and economic governance, agrarian change and ‘land grabbing’, food security, natural resources. Civil society/social movements, social and solidarity economy. ICTs, innovation, trade and investment, TNC/CSR. Applied methods, professional skills.
Evolution of themes and actors	Security/conflict-related issues, migration, aid effectiveness and impact evaluation, South–South cooperation. New actors (philanthropists, foundations and corporations, emerging aid donors).
Evolution of DS education and learning	Stronger interest in professional skills, in policy planning, and management. Multi-locational training, fieldwork, practical experience.

Source: Responses to the questionnaire from EADI Executive Committee members and Working Group convenors and inputs throughout the feedback process.

25 The topics most frequently cited are climate change, armed conflict and security and the increasing role of the private sector. These are followed by migration, emerging economies and the need for acquiring or strengthening professional or applied skills. Many of these topics relate to global public goods that transcend the old divide between North and South, which had long been at the core of DS in Europe. Conversely, the survey underlines that inequality, social exclusion and

marginalisation are global concerns of direct relevance to European societies as well. The broadening scope of themes falling under DS leads to tensions regarding the field's boundaries, as well as to some concerns related to the potential blurring of lines between DS and other fields. This is, for instance, the case with international studies (IS), which increasingly encompasses global issues that also lie at the core of DS, such as global health, South–South and South–North migration, gender or climate change.

- 26 Last but not least, the fundamental question of ‘what is development’ kept emerging—be it at the EADI Directors’ Meeting or during the subsequent feedback loops. Some argued in favour of redefining the concept of development beyond the notion of ‘societal change’, for example by better integrating the sustainability imperative and encompassing ‘change’ in a broader variety of dimensions related to the human condition,¹⁵ including by looking, for example, at the religion–development nexus (Khartas and Silva, 2013).

5. Discussion

- 27 We started our consultations by sharing the 2005 EADI Vision Paper on Development Studies. It came somewhat as a surprise that the vast majority of respondents in Europe, and many interviewees in China and South Africa, felt that this Vision Paper—released over ten years ago—remains not too far off the mark despite the radical changes in the global development landscape since 2005. That Vision Paper advanced a definition of DS that was generic and broad enough to capture the essence of the field without being made too quickly obsolete by changes in the global environment. What remains relatively consensual relates to the multi- or interdisciplinary nature of DS as well as its context-specific and policy orientation.

5.1. Convergence and Divergence

- 28 While our review and limited non-representative sample of interviewees in Europe, China and South Africa remains limited do not allow for sweeping generalisations, a few issues facing the DS field nonetheless emerge, with converging trends in some instances and tensions or divergences in others.
- 29 Overall, international development studies seems to be, relatively, thriving in several parts of the world, including North America.¹⁶ Student cohorts are stable or growing in several European countries and in South Africa. While still modest in China, the field is expected to grow strongly over the coming years and several new programmes and schools are opening (e.g. the Institute of South-South Cooperation and Development at Peking University inaugurated in April 2016 and headed by Justin Yifu Lin, a former Chief Economist of the World Bank).
- 30 Consultations reveal convergence and shared perceptions across geographical boundaries with regard to a few core characteristics of the DS field in terms of its object, purpose and approach. There is, first, widely shared recognition of the interdisciplinary (or at least multidisciplinary) nature of DS embedded in the social sciences, with increasing interactions with ‘hard science’. Second, at a normative level, there is a shared concern for social issues related to poverty, inequality, exclusion and, to varying degrees, environmental sustainability. Third, DS is recognised as being context sensitive. One of the distinctive features of DS is a tendency to analyse complex problem areas from a multi-level (local, national, regional and global), multi-stakeholder (state/non-state, formal/informal, local/international actors) and yet context-specific perspective. Fourth, DS looks not only at development policies, but also at processes and practice. Fifth, DS tends to be

problem-oriented to the extent that the field is concerned with real world problems and how to address them. This is echoed by a growing emphasis on—and demand for—professional and ‘soft’ skills in standard DS curricula. In sum, a majority of researchers and teaching staff within the DS community seek to ‘make a difference’ by influencing political/social actors (see Sumner and Tribe, 2008b). As DS is indeed increasingly concerned with informing policy and influencing action, greater attention is devoted to measuring such relevance and outcomes, including in educational curricula and research methods.

31 Conversely, we also identified points of tension and divergence within the DS field. The relevance and legitimacy of research designs, findings and recommendations from the ‘the old metropolitan centre’ as applicable to the developing world are being challenged. Traditional Western DS, which built on a fading dichotomy between the industrialised and developing worlds, is being increasingly questioned, with alternatives anchored in the recognition of diverse knowledge ecologies and South–South academic cooperation (see e.g. de Sousa Santos, 2014). Giving greater space to domestically produced knowledge, new DS programmes in China draw for example on the recent Chinese development experience, which is seen as (at least) as relevant as that of industrialised countries decades or centuries ago. Further research is required to avert generalisations when it comes to ‘DS in the global South’, as illustrated by the different paradigms prevailing in South Africa and China.

5.2. Epistemological Issues

32 The composite and interdisciplinary nature of the DS field has been subject to much debate. Indeed, research in this field includes a broad variety of social inquiry approaches embedded in positivist, interpretative, historical and critical social research. Methodological approaches to development research range all the way from inductive methods grounded in the observation of field reality to hypothetico-deductive approaches aimed at testing empirically theory-based models. In short, DS integrate the concepts, models and paradigms from the relevant disciplines concerned with DS.

33 The extent to which DS truly succeeds in moving beyond mere multidisciplinary remains a question when defining the field and its methodological specificity (which is also the case for other interdisciplinary fields of inquiry). Besides, the meaning and bearing of ‘multidisciplinary’ or ‘interdisciplinarity’ remains the subject of lively debate. This was already identified in the 2005 Vision Paper, which stressed the contested notion of interdisciplinarity,¹⁷ while many related concepts are subject to various interpretations (multidisciplinary,¹⁸ cross-disciplinarity, pluri-disciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity).¹⁹ Such forms of knowledge production can at least be defined in contrast to what is often seen today as ‘normal’—that is to say, disciplinary—knowledge production. Cross-disciplinary interactions may range from a mere exchange of ideas and the comparison of findings on a single issue studied from diverse disciplinary angles to the collaborative generation of research questions and evidence through shared methodological approaches and research procedures, which can involve the integration of some of the concepts, theories and epistemological foundations of several disciplines.

34 As the scope and range of issues falling under the umbrella of the DS field expands, the positioning and relationship of DS vis-à-vis other fields, such as international studies (IS), area studies, or ecology, are evolving fast. Global issues such as climate change, security, migration or global health are key topics in both the DS and IS fields. The former tends to emphasise the complex interactions between local, regional and global dynamics involving a broad range of stakeholders beyond state actors, while the latter might emphasise—slightly more—issues related to global

governance and public policy. In the same vein, the intensifying relationship between DS and hard sciences deserves further scrutiny as ecological issues and the nexus between technology and development gain momentum. Technology is set to play a major role in the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. Leading technological schools (such as EPFL in Lausanne) have beefed up programmes for engineers and other scientists interested in helping meet global societal and environmental challenges, which include multidisciplinary approaches that draw on the social sciences and include field experience in developing countries.

6. Towards a Renewed Vision

35 Based on the research and consultations summarised above, teaching and learning outcomes within an updated vision of the DS field were discussed at EADI Directors' Meetings in October 2015 and June 2016. Thereafter, a renewed DS vision has been advanced along the following lines:

1. *Development Studies (also known as 'international development studies') is a multi- and interdisciplinary field of study that seeks to understand social, economic, political, technological, ecological, gender and cultural aspects of societal change at the local, national, regional and global levels, and the interplay between these different levels and the stakeholders involved.*
2. *The field of development studies is also characterised by normative and policy concerns about inclusive, rights-based and sustainable development. It aims at contributing to possible solutions to societal problems and is engaged with development discourses, processes, policies and practice. Though strategic and policy options and recommendations have been dominant concerns in development studies, there has never been a consensus on these matters, nor should there be.*
3. *Development studies is context sensitive. It aims to take into account the specificity of different societies in terms of their history, institutions, culture, environment, knowledge, technology, etc. It, further, examines how such differences translate into varied development trajectories, strategies, policies, processes and practices. It examines societal change within a historical, comparative and global perspective.*
4. *Development studies is an evolving field of study that covers an expanding range of topics and concerns (including environmental sustainability and climate change, globalisation and global governance, armed conflict and violence, urbanisation, gender, migration, global health, labour, and social protection). The range of topics the field covers and the methods it uses evolve over time, as witnessed by an increasing interplay between social and 'hard' sciences and the emergence of novel topics such as South–South cooperation, poverty and social exclusion in industrialised countries, technological innovation and new (commercial) actors in international development cooperation.*
5. *Development studies promotes and draws part of its strength from partnership and cross-fertilisation between institutions and individuals anchored in different disciplines and traditions, and working in different parts of the world. It seeks to promote equitable research partnerships among them.*

36 As mentioned, this updated 'vision' does not radically deviate from what was advanced in the 2005 paper. This might result from the fact that—even though we expanded our study to include the views of scholars, teaching staff and students from emerging economies—the study originated again from EADI; that is to say, from a

Western/European perspective. In addition, many of the academics whom we interviewed in South Africa and China were educated in North American and European academic institutions and thus partly shared an anchoring in Western 'knowledge ecologies'. Finally, it is important to underline that our small interviewee sample can by no means be regarded as representative and should be expanded to include major players, such as DS actors in other emerging (notably India and Brazil) and developing countries.

37 In the coming years, profound transformations in the development landscape may spur more substantial changes in response to centrifugal forces. DS as a field of study is not only expanding in Southern academia. The field is also becoming broader and more universal, as reflected in the global development agenda subsumed under the SDGs. As a consequence, the previous division of labour between DS and other fields, which used to give DS a specific identity, is being questioned, while the DS field is encroached on by other fields such as IS. This may eventually pose a risk of dilution of DS itself, as topics of interest multiply and become global. DS scholars may be more interested in engaging peers and epistemic communities within narrower thematic areas such as, for example, migration, health, trade, labour, and environmental issues. We may thus expect a reconfiguration of scholarly DS communities around specific themes of mutual interest that cut across disciplinary and spatial boundaries, such as security, energy and climate change, education and training, public health or migration, combined with an increasing policy focus and concern for relevance and impact.

38 With the questioning of normative frameworks and development models originating in Western knowledge ecologies, we may expect an increasing 'localisation' of DS in conjunction with a more contextualised understanding and approaches to development problems. At the same time, we may expect growing interconnections with other fields of study, such as the life sciences, environmental science and international studies. Yet, an important question deserving further research is how to decolonise knowledge in development studies, a field strongly anchored in the social sciences. The relevant disciplines emerged and developed during colonial times, mostly in Western Europe during the 19th century. This calls for further reconsidering the disciplinary heritage of international development studies.

ANNEXES

Annex 1

Inventory of titles by category

Type of publication	2000	2015	Absolute increase (2000-2015)	Percentage increase (2000-2015)*
Number of publications	62	549	487	7.85
Discipline				
Law	5	79	74	14.80
Economics	36	269	233	6.47
Politics	15	228	213	14.20
History	2	25	23	11.50
Anthropology	1	61	60	60.00
Sociology	5	102	97	19.40
Geography	3	136	133	44.33
Average absolute increase	119.00			
Average percentage increase***	24.39			
Field of Studies				
Demography	1	11	10	10.00
Gender	1	41	40	40.00
Environment	15	193	178	11.87
Education, Training, Learning	1	34	33	33.00
Average absolute increase	65.25			
Average percentage increase***	23.72			
Topics				
Tourism	1	23	22	22.00
Governance	2	49	47	23.50
Conflict/Post-conflict	2	24	22	11.00
Globalisation	2	32	30	15.00
Inequalities	2	14	12	6.00
Poverty	3	16	13	4.33
Human Development	0	4	4	**
Foreign Aid	3	10	7	2.33
Climate Change	3	68	65	21.67
Sustainability/Sustainable Development	10	137	127	12.70
Migration	3	28	25	8.33
Disaster	0	20	20	**
Employment/Labour	7	29	22	3.14
Agriculture	5	30	25	5.00
Water	0	17	17	**
Health	1	25	24	24.00
Security	3	21	18	6.00
Cities/Urban space	4	78	74	18.50
Rural	4	41	37	9.25
Trade	1	17	16	16.00
Industry	4	28	24	6.00
Energy	2	17	15	7.50
Technology	1	28	27	27.00
Impact measurement/Accountability/M&E	0	8	8	**
Religion	0	10	10	**
Food	5	24	19	3.80
Average absolute increase	28.08			
Average percentage increase***	12.05			
Regions				
Africa	3	59	56	18.67
Asia	10	130	120	12.00
Latin America/Caribbean	4	32	28	7.00
Middle East	0	10	10	**
Europe/North America	6	33	27	4.50
Pacific	1	7	6	6.00
Average absolute increase	41.17			
Average percentage increase***	9.63			
Others				
Others	1	13	12	12.00

Absolute increase higher than average

% increase higher than average

Both increase higher than average

* Numbers rounded off to 2 decimal places.

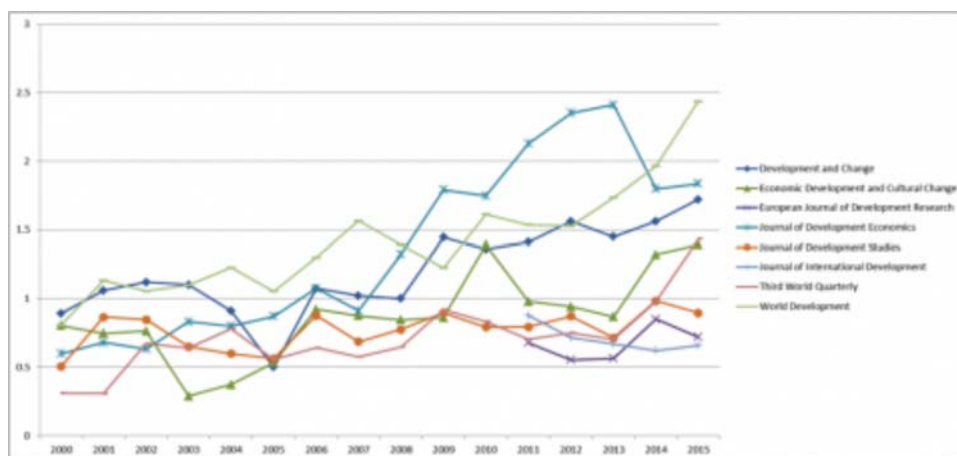
** For entries with the value of 0 for the year 2000, the percentage increase cannot be calculated and hence is left unspecified.

*** Calculations for average percentage increase exclude entries for which the percentage increase is unspecified.

Sources: Authors' elaboration based on catalogue searches of Edward Elgar Publishing (2016), Routledge (2016), Columbia University Press (2016), Cambridge University Press (2016), and Oxford University Press (2016).

Annex 2

Evolution of impact factors—Development studies journals (2000 to 2015)



Source: Authors' elaboration based on data retrieved from Thomson Reuters (2016).

Notes

1 It is foreseen that a consolidated revised Vision Paper will be presented in August 2017 at the EADI General Conference in Bergen, Norway. This revised Vision Paper will also feed into the accreditation and quality assurance work that EADI's International Accreditation Council (IAC) is undertaking.

2 There were of course important exceptions, such as Amartya Sen, Arturo Escobar, Akin Mabogunje or Arjun Appadurai. The need to look at theories originating in the South has also been highlighted by scholars such as Jean and John Comaroff (2012).

3 See for instance the recent article by Jolly and Santos (2016) tracing the evolution and narratives that have framed 'development' since 1945.

4 Impact is measured by the number of citations per published article, adjusted across fields. SeeSNSF – Swiss Academies (2016).

5 Edward Elgar Publishing ('Development Studies'), Routledge ('Development Studies'), Columbia University Press ('Development Economics'), Cambridge University Press ('Economic Development and Growth') and Oxford University Press('Development Studies'). We further consideredPalgrave Macmillan ('Development Studies') but did not include it in the comparison given that data for 2000 could not be retrieved.

6 There have been recent calls to reconsider the secular development enterprise as the norm and, in this context, religion as a separate object of study. See e.g. Carbonnier (2013).

7 No development-related publications were listed in the Hurst catalogue in 2000.

8 See Lewis et al. (2014).

9 We did not include the e-journals that have emerged between the two reference years. Several e-journals have no standard IF notwithstanding remarkably high paper download numbers.

10 *Gender Studies* had a very low IF in 2000, which explains the steep increase in relative terms.

11 Including scientists from the University of the Western Cape, the University of the Limpopo, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, the University of Fort Hare, the University of Kwazulu Natal, the University of Johannesburg, the University of the Witwatersrand, the University of South Africa (UNISA), Stellenbosch University and the University of Cape Town.

12 The questionnaire, sent between 21 May and 20 June 2015, focused on how academics and researchers perceive the evolution of the DS field since the initial Vision Paper was adopted in 2005. Respondents from 15 countries completed the questionnaire (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Spain, Slovenia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom).

13 A total of 34 participants attended the EADI Directors' Meeting, representing organisations from northern, western, southern and eastern Europe.

14 Written contributions received from experts based in Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom.

15 For a discussion, see for instance Sumner and Tribe (2006; 2008a).

16 It is interesting to note that development studies in the US, contrary to Canada, has never been established as a clearly identified field of teaching and research, notwithstanding the fact



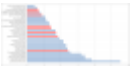



that that some key programmes in top universities and a few relevant journals are located in the country. From the limited research that was conducted on this topic with regard to the US, it appears that there is a trend to integrate a specialisation in 'international development' as part of Master of Arts programmes in international affairs/relations. Such specialisation seems to be attracting a growing number of students, who see an interest in terms of their education and career prospects.


17 An interdisciplinary approach implies a direct interaction between the disciplines, with individuals being knowledgeable and experienced in more than one discipline. It creates its own theoretical, conceptual and methodological identity. Consequently, the results of an interdisciplinary study of a certain problem should be more coherent and integrated. An influential OECD study defined interdisciplinarity as 'the interaction between two or more disciplines. This interaction can go from the mere transmission to the mutual integration of the basic concepts, epistemology, terminology, processes, as well as of the organisation of training and research' (see Apostel, 1972).

18 In a multidisciplinary approach, the object under study is approached from different angles, using different disciplinary perspectives. However, neither the theoretical perspectives nor the findings from the various disciplines are integrated.

19 A disciplinary research field can be defined (in line with Kuhn, 1962) as involving a group of researchers working on a specific set of research questions, using the same set of methods and a shared approach. Disciplinary research is 'normal problem solving' within a 'paradigm'. Non-disciplinary research, then, can be seen as ways of combining elements from various disciplines, as an interaction among two or more different disciplinary specialties, in an attempt to apprehend the social reality in all its complexity rather than in a fragmented manner. This is also carried out in an attempt to address practical questions or to solve concrete issues and produce new knowledge.

List of illustrations

	URL	http://journals.openedition.org/poldev/docannexe/image/2393/img-1.png
	File	image/png, 65k
	Title	Figure 2: Impact factors for selected journals in the DS and connected fields (2000)
	Credits	Source: Authors' elaboration based on data retrieved from Thomson Reuters (2016).
	URL	http://journals.openedition.org/poldev/docannexe/image/2393/img-2.png
	File	image/png, 143k
	Title	Figure 3: Impact factors for selected journals in the DS and connected fields (2015)
	Credits	Source: Authors' elaboration based on data retrieved from Thomson Reuters (2016).
	URL	http://journals.openedition.org/poldev/docannexe/image/2393/img-3.png
	File	image/png, 116k
	Title	Figure 4: Impact factor percentage increase between 2000 and 2015—only for journals with data available for both years ¹⁰
	Credits	Source: Authors' elaboration based on data retrieved from Thomson Reuters (2016).
	URL	http://journals.openedition.org/poldev/docannexe/image/2393/img-4.png
	File	image/png, 51k
	Title	Inventory of titles by category
	Credits	Sources: Authors' elaboration based on catalogue searches of Edward Elgar Publishing (2016), Routledge (2016), Columbia University Press (2016), Cambridge University Press (2016), and Oxford University Press (2016).
	URL	http://journals.openedition.org/poldev/docannexe/image/2393/img-5.png

	File	image/png, 227k
	Title	Evolution of impact factors—Development studies journals (2000 to 2015)
	Credits	Source: Authors' elaboration based on data retrieved from Thomson Reuters (2016).
	URL	http://journals.openedition.org/poldev/docannexe/image/2393/img-6.png
	File	image/png, 111k

Cite this article

Electronic reference

Joost Mönks, Gilles Carbonnier, Aude Mellet and Leo de Haan, « Towards a Renewed Vision of Development Studies », *International Development Policy | Revue internationale de politique de développement* [Online], 8.1 | 2017, Online since 21 June 2017, connection on 03 May 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/poldev/2393> ; DOI : 10.4000/poldev.2393

About the authors

Joost Mönks

Joost Mönks is the Executive Director of NORRAG, a global education policy think tank and network based at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva. He also serves as Secretary General of the EADI International Accreditation Council for Development Studies (IAC/EADI). Previously he worked as a strategy consultant in a wide range of national and international public and non-profit organisations. He holds a Master's degree in International Relations from the Graduate Institute and obtained his PhD in Political Economics from Geneva University.

Gilles Carbonnier

Gilles Carbonnier is Professor of Development Economics at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. He is Vice-President of the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes. His research and teaching focuses on the governance of natural resources, war and disaster economics and international cooperation. His latest book is *Humanitarian Economics. War, Disaster and the Global Aid Market* (Hurst and Oxford University Press, 2016).

By this author

Foreword [Full text]

Prológo [Full text | translation]

Published in *International Development Policy | Revue internationale de politique de développement*, 9 | 2017

Alternative Development Narratives, Policies and Outcomes in the Andean Region [Full text]

Narrativas, políticas y resultados del desarrollo alternativo en la región andina [Full text | translation]

Published in *International Development Policy | Revue internationale de politique de développement*, 9 | 2017

Foreword [Full text]

to 'Development as a Battlefield'

Published in *International Development Policy | Revue internationale de politique de développement*, 8 | 2017

Foreword [Full text]

to 'Combining Economic and Political Development: The Experience of MENA'

Published in *International Development Policy | Revue internationale de politique de développement*, 7 | 2017

Foreword [Full text]

to 'Large-Scale Land Acquisitions: Focus on South-East Asia'

Published in *International Development Policy | Revue internationale de politique de développement*, 6 | 2015

Commodity Trading and Illicit Financial Flows [Full text]

Published in *International Development Policy* | *Revue internationale de politique de développement*,

Policy Briefs | Working Papers

All documents

Aude Mellet

Aude Mellet holds an International Executive Masters in Development Studies from the Graduate Institute. She works as a communication officer at NORRAG, where she is also involved, as a research assistant, in the process of drafting a new Vision Paper on Development Studies.

Leo de Haan

Leo de Haan is Professor of Development Studies and former Rector of the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. He has also served as Director of the African Studies Centre (ASC) Leiden and as Professor of Development in Sub-Saharan Africa at Leiden University. Before directing ASC Leiden, he was Professor of Development Studies at Radboud University Nijmegen and Director of the Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen (CIDIN). His areas of expertise include livelihoods of the poor, social protection, and Africa.

Copyright



International Development Policy is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.