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## Editorial

### Moving up a gear: The new face of the *EJDR*

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Welcome to the first issue of Volume 21. Welcome – too – to the first issue of the revamped, redesigned, reformatted and much-improved *EJDR*.

Some of you may have noticed some of the innovations that have been creeping into the *EJDR* over the last couple of years. We have – for instance – entirely changed the ‘look’ of the journal – new fonts, larger issues, and most importantly a smart, new and visually stunning new cover. But it has not only been about external appearances. This is not a case of old wine in new bottles. No, indeed, for as many of you have already noticed there are also subtle and important changes in the content. Supported by an enlarged and decidedly first-rate editorial team consisting on the academic side of Andy Mold (OECD Development Centre, Paris), Claire Mainguy (University of Strasbourg), Dennis Rodgers (Brooks World Poverty Institute, University of Manchester) and Marina Della Giusta (University of Reading), and on the administrative side by an irrepressible Barbara Coghlan (based at the Graduate Institute in Geneva), we have fired ahead with providing you with a lot more for your *EJDR* subscription, such as

- Better articles – we have streamlined our reviewing guidelines and raised our standards.
- A faster turn-around on submissions – Since mid-2007, all submissions are made on our online submission system, while still insisting on a double blind review system. This has improved our ability to audit and monitor progress of submissions, and partly as a result, the average first-review turnaround time has reduced substantially to about 95 days.
- A number of hard-hitting special issues over the last 2 years, with several more to come.
- More articles – our submissions have almost tripled over the last 2 years, and despite an acceptance rate of 40 per cent and falling, the size of the average issue has increased quite considerably over the last 3 years. The average issue now tends towards about 10 articles per issue.

In short, we have seen an increased demand for space as both quality and quantity have shot up, and we are fast becoming the journal of choice for a variety of contributors. It is therefore with a small pinch of pride that I am happy to announce that as of Volume 21, we will increase our publication frequency from four to five issues a year. We are also happy to announce that *EJDR* will henceforth be published by Palgrave Macmillan.

Of course, all these changes have received the unconditional support of our editorial board. This too, has seen some changes. As befitting a field as broad, diverse, multi-disciplinary and dynamic as development studies, we have also decided to actively review the composition of our editorial board. Henceforth, all appointments to the editorial board will be for a period of 2 years, renewed on a rolling basis. This is in part to reflect that as a development journal, we need to increase the presence of distinguished scholars from outside Europe – and particularly from the developing world. We also need to continually enlist younger scholars, as well as researchers from a variety of

underrepresented disciplines and schools of thought. We are not alone in this trend – all successful academic journals need to constantly renew their intellectual spirit, and we are trying to do so by including new areas, ways of thinking, sub-fields and disciplines, and this must also reflect itself in the makeup of the board. New editorial board members include Thomas Biersteker, Anthony D’Costa, Helge Hveem, Rajah Rasiah and Raphie Kaplinsky.

Inevitably, to make room for the newcomers, we need to say ‘au revoir’ to some of the editorial board members who have served us long and well over the years. I would like to take the opportunity to thank José Antonio Alonso, Taaka Awori, Irène Bellier, Stefan Brüne, Pablo Bustelo, Leila Fernández-Stembridge, Mile Jovic, Leonardo Garnier, Michèle Leclerc-Olive, Christian Lund, Carlos Rozo and John Toye.

We have also planned to roll out several new features over the next few years.

First, we shall be publishing – on a fairly regular basis – invited guest editorials and opinion pieces on a variety of current and topical issues. This, in our view, overcomes one of the traditional shortcomings of academic journals. It is a rare article that makes it through the maze from submission to print in less than a year. The field of development is often faced with new paradigms and new radical thought, be they political, economic, sociological or anthropological. Sometimes a significant or controversial new theoretical or methodological issue thrusts itself upon the reality of development. Ordinarily, such ideas must leap several hurdles before they receive the considered attention of the academic community.

Academic articles, too, tend to veer towards the cautious and the obviously defensible, and away from the opportune, the brilliant conjecture and the sharp-of-word. Where possible, academics are inclined to weigh down that beautiful and inspired thought with verbiage, citations and the baggage of jargon, such that it is lost to all but a few specialists in a narrow subject area.

This is surely an injustice. New ideas need to be presented to the development studies community in a fairly rapid way, and be accessible not just to the academic specialist, but also to the practitioner, the politician and the policy-maker with a minimum of turgidity and as little fuss as possible.

The first such undertaking appears in this issue. We have assembled a collection of personal reflective essays by five members of leading development institutes in Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America. Each was given a simple and rather general mandate: *what do you see to be the key development issues for the next decade?* The diversity of the field development studies is immediately apparent from these contributions, which all display different approaches and preoccupations that are often linked to their geographical standpoint. Taken together, however, they provide us with a fascinating and truly global window onto the emergent cutting edge of development studies. As befits such an exercise, three of the essays are in English, one in French and one in Spanish, the three official publication languages of the Journal.

We shall also be publishing in the second issue of Volume 21 yet another innovation – a specially themed debate section that will focus on landmark development reports, something that we feel has been lacking in the past in development journals. Certainly, such reports have often been highly influential. For example, the UNDP’s 1990 *Human Development Report* launched the Human Development Index, while the World Bank’s 2001 *Voices of the Poor* report represented the first mainstream attempt to broaden the way we represent poverty, and UNRISD’s 1995 *States of Disarray* report was simply far ahead of the curve in recognizing the importance of the now much *en vogue* issue of

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conflict and violence for contemporary development. Although such reports are almost obligatorily read by development academics, policy-makers and practitioners alike, they are rarely talked about explicitly in academic forums, except when they are surrounded by controversy, as was famously the case of the World Bank's 2001 *World Development Report*, for example. Our new themed debate sections will include a summary of a report by one of its authors or contributors, followed by a constructive critique from a prominent development specialist – either academic or practitioner – and finally a reply from a member of the institution that produced the report. We will be kicking off this innovation by considering the University of Manchester Chronic Poverty Research Centre's *Chronic Poverty Report 2008–09*, which has already been causing quite a stir within UK policy circles.

Lastly, we hope – at some point in 2009 – to introduce a *policy briefing* section. This will aim to distil important research findings as well as results from the field into short, concise and accessible articles for use by those who seek to draw broad lessons from the experiences and research of others.

We hope you like what we have done – and most importantly – we hope you will feel inspired to read your copy of *EJDR* from cover-to-cover, and recommend it to others! We are very optimistic indeed that these and other developments will move us ever forward in the field.

Rajneesh Narula  
Editor-in-Chief