

EVIDENCE REPORT

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Rising Powers in International Development

Advisory Council Seminar VI, 7 July 2014: IDS Rising Powers in International Development Advisory Council Discussion

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The IDS programme on Strengthening Evidence-based Policy works across seven key themes. Each theme works with partner institutions to co-construct policy-relevant knowledge and engage in policy-influencing processes. This material has been developed under the Rising Powers in International Development theme.

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1 Introduction

This document presents a summary of a discussion held on 7 July 2014 between members of the Advisory Council of the IDS Rising Powers in International Development (RPID) programme and IDS RPID staff members. (See list of participants in Annex.) The discussion was held at the Institute of Development Studies in Brighton.

2 Agenda

The following items were discussed:

- China and international development
- Recent RPID events in Rio, March 2014
- Mexico High-Level Meeting (HLM) and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC), April 2014
- African Transformation Report.

3 Key discussion points

- The meeting discussed recent events, including a seminar held earlier that day at IDS by several of those present at the meeting. The seminar was to mark the recent launch of the *IDS Bulletin* 'China and International Development'. Programme convenor Jing Gu (lead editor of the issue) and other council members were speakers at the earlier seminar; they presented on the implications of China's dynamic changes and its high-speed development, including the implications of China's development finance activities. Another council member also emphasised the issue of development knowledge, how it was produced and generated, and the need to develop a nuanced understanding of knowledge that goes beyond the dichotomy of Western and Chinese, and greater intellectual interactions between them. The council member noted that his paper, presented in Beijing and Shanghai, had gained traction with the World Bank. The paper, which acknowledges IDS, focused on the geopolitical rather than developmental issues of Chinese foreign aid.
- The meeting discussed the events held in Rio in March 2014. IDS Fellow Alex Shankland briefed the council members on the programme of events, which comprised a number of thematic meetings, notably the work on the Green Transformation led by Hubert Schmitz, and colleagues including Adrian Ely at the Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability (STEPS) Centre, a body of work which former Advisory Council member Rômulo Paes de Sousa is now leading. The RPID programme also held a flagship network dialogue meeting with partners in the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) Policy Council, the BRICS Policy Center and Articulação SUL. RPID was also invited to meetings convened by the BRICS Policy Center, which was the first dialogue that included the Brazilian Development Bank, as well as private sector actors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). There was also an interesting meeting with Brazilian civil society actors, which discussed the prospects for the upcoming BRICS summit. It was a rich and interesting programme, with very high multi-stakeholder participation. A final synthesis discussion formed the basis of a forthcoming book proposal based on the BRICS State of the Debate.

- A council member gave a summary of the Mexico High-Level Meeting and the GPEDC, which IDS attended and at which IDS hosted a panel. It was deemed a highly successful and well-attended event, with fruitful discussions on the production of knowledge. There were several proposed actions arising from the events for the next two years until the following summit: a proposal for the Future International Cooperation Policy Network was produced; and a second output comprises work led by Alex Shankland and partners at Articulação SUL focused on civil society organisations (CSOs) and South-South Cooperation (SSC). One council member noted that the panel, which was focused on non-state actors, was the only one in the conference that gave focus to civil society and its neglected role in South-South Cooperation, which largely focuses on governments. The value of the case studies presented at the forum showed that SSC was not merely limited to governments, but was also anchored to civil society, whose role is not recognised in the policy domain as a legitimate contribution to SSC. Alex Shankland noted a call he had had with the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE), an official CSO engagement platform for the GPEDC, and where one of the working groups, led by Princess Celestina from the Philippines, focuses on SSC. There are plans for a potential e-discussion to be convened to generate inputs for CPDE's contributions to the GPEDC steering committee on civil society and SSC. Though there were some concerns for the political sensitivities surrounding CSOs and representation, the framework of convening CSOs and inviting them into the conversation, with IDS producing the content, was argued to be a good inclusive method.
- Jing Gu raised the question of which key policy messages were arriving from the Mexico HLM, and what differences there were between the Mexico and Busan meetings. A council member responded that while Busan created a wider community and wider agenda in development partnership, the Mexico meeting was to figure out how this would work. There was high energy and participation, and a much more multi-actor, multidirectional learning process, rather than a structured, governmental process, as the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) remains, and the member speculated on a possible evolutionary process for how these forums would emerge and develop. Ban Ki-moon was also noted to be present at the meeting, and highly committed to the process.
- One council member discussed a recent thinktank report – the African Transformation Report – and its contribution to development narratives. Reactions have been highly encouraging, and several meetings held have commented on it, including meetings with the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in Paris, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London, and with the African Development Bank. *The Economist* and other papers have also commented on it, and it has made a large contribution to the development paradigm. The council member explained the report's concept of DEPTH, a framework to measure the quality of Africa's growth, which comprises: Diversification of production of exports; Export competitiveness; Productivity; Technology; and Human wellbeing. The report also created an African Transformation Index, designed to track the fast pace of change in African countries. There will be an Africa Transformation forum six months from now, which will bring together policymakers to discuss this report.
- One council member noted a forthcoming event with an All-Party Parliamentary Group in Parliament, timed to coincide with the BRICS summit on Wednesday 16 July, where he would be presenting on the BRICS State of the Debate, alongside Alex Shankland and Stephany Griffith-Jones.

- One council member made a final comment on the Mexico events, in that it was interesting to consider attendance, and who was absent: none of the BRICS attended, or, in the case of Brazil, representatives did attend but did not formally participate in the process. There were many questions over the absence of China. A council member speculated that China required a pre-agreed communiqué and did not want a process where they might be put on the spot, as was the case in Busan, hence its non-attendance. Another council member commented that China did not understand politically the need for the process and this separate exercise, which it sees as conflicting with the UN Development Forum. It also did not understand the emphasis on SSC, as North-South Cooperation is still seen as being of primary importance. The emphasis on business and investment was also a possible source of misunderstanding, and the conflation of business and politics. Jing Gu questioned whether this was a disagreement over basic concepts. One council member, who noted that he prepared an internal note for the Chinese government on the Mexico forum, argued that there was a basic challenge of legitimacy over the forum, as compared to the UN Development Forum; secondly, the strong role of business was seen as overweighted, and a point of contention; thirdly, there was still suspicion that the forum was the equivalent of 'old wine, new bottles'.
- On India's position, one council member noted that there was very poor representation. There has been much domestic discussion on India's position during the past 18 months, where India's trade and economic affairs have not been well organised. Now there is a clearer mandate for the Ministry of External Affairs, which has been tasked with economic affairs of trade, negotiation, and deals, but there is a clear signal from the prime minister's office that political diplomacy will lie in his domain. There is also anticipated in the new budget a substantial upgrade for the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) – India's current MEA is smaller than that of Singapore's. India's lack of participation also stems from its ambiguity in its relationships with other institutions, and an internal debate on how it ought to relate and interact with institutions including the OECD and the BRICS, etc.; with the lack of a political direction, there was little sense in participation.
- A council member commented on the upcoming BRICS summit in Fortaleza. Plans for the BRICS Bank are going ahead, and the headquarters are likely to be based in Shanghai. The summit will be a collection of processes which will involve business councils, academics and thinktanks, and there is still an identity search going on. While the impact of Crimea is still unknown, the BRICS appear to be holding together on the issue. A strong editorial in *The Economist* on Bretton Woods argued that the West had caused confusion by bringing in the BRICS, or not bringing them in, to global institutions.
- On the Brazilian side, Alex Shankland commented that Brazil's position would develop further after the upcoming election. At present, the presidency remains the policy centre and core policymaking unit, but there is still no clear focus on the BRICS. The political rhetoric still echoes the Lula era; however, the reality on the ground has moved on from SSC, and there is a sense that policy positions will not move on until after the election. Meanwhile, Brazilian civil society is trapped between institutionalisation at the summit and criticising the Bank. There is still a certain nervousness domestically, and fear of street protests (as was the case last year) remains, and continuous monitoring of Brazil's domestic currents and trends is needed, post-summit.

Annex

IDS Staff, Present

Jing Gu
Louise Oakley
Yunnan Chen
Alex Shankland
Gerry Bloom
Jennifer Constantine
Emilie Wilson

Advisory Council Members, Present

Richard Carey
Li Xiaoyun
Richard Manning
Merle Lipton
Nora Lustig

Present via Skype

Gabriele Koehler
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