

DEVELOPMENT STUDIES ENTERING A *CUL-DE-SAC*? REFLECTIONS ON DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE: A HISTORICAL APPRAISAL

Ong Puay Liu & Sarmila Md Sum
School of Social, Development and Environmental Studies
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
43600 Bangi, Selangor

Abstract

The “fate of development studies” in the context of the dominant thinking on development as propagated by development theorists was one of the main themes highlighted in the 5th International Malaysian Studies Conference (MSC5).¹ Indeed, the MSC5 convenors evoke the call for a reflection on the implications for and the future of development studies in Malaysia. Reflection on the fate and future of development studies in Malaysia requires us, in particular, to understand how development studies has been understood as an academic discipline and implemented by institutions of higher learning. This article undertakes to do a historical appraisal of development studies as an academic discipline under the guidance of the following questions: (i) How development studies emerge as a (serious) academic discipline in institutions of higher learning; (ii) How these institutions of higher learning define “development” and “development studies”; and (iii) What are their objectives/rationale, methodology and scope? Through this historical appraisal, this article hopes to configurate a model of development studies that incorporates not only the substantive components (interdisciplinary subject matter) but also the *praxis* component (‘doing’ development through for example, immersion and advocacy) in order to make development studies a socially responsible and relevant field in development process and planning.

Key words: development, development studies, development science, academic discipline, Malaysian Social Science Association

Abstrak

Kedudukan kajian pembangunan dalam konteks wacana dominan mengenai pembangunan sepertimana dimajukan oleh pemikir teoretis pembangunan merupakan salah satu tema yang diberi penekanan utama dalam Persidangan Antarabangsa Kajian Malaysia (MSC5). Sememangnya, penganjur MSC5 telah bersuara lantang mengenai keperluan berfikir kembali mengenai implikasi dan masa depan pengajian pembangunan di Malaysia. Renungan semula mengenai kedudukan dan hala tuju pengajian pembangunan di Malaysia menuntut kita untuk mengetahui bagaimana pengajian pembangunan difahami sebagai satu disiplin akademik di institusi-institusi pengajian tinggi dan bentuk pelaksanaan pengajian pembangunan di institusi-institusi tersebut.

Makalah ini bertujuan untuk membuat satu penelitian sejarah mengenai pengajian pembangunan sebagai satu disiplin akademik berpandukan soalan-soalan berikut: (i) bagaimana pengajian pembangunan wujud sebagai satu disiplin akademik (serius) di institusi-institusi pengajian tinggi; (ii) bagaimana institusi-institusi ini mendefinisikan “pembangunan” dan “pengajian pembangunan”; dan (iii) apakah objektif/rasional, metodologi dan skop pengajian pembangunan? Melalui penelitian sejarah ini, makalah ini berharap dapat membentuk satu model pengajian pembangunan yang merangkumi bukan sahaja komponen-komponen substantif (asas kandungan inter-disiplin), tetapi juga komponen *praxis* (iaitu, ‘membuat’ pembangunan melalui pengikutsertaan dan advokasi) supaya pengajian pembangunan lebih menghayati tanggungjawab sosial dan menjadi relevan kepada proses pembangunan dan perancangan.

Kata kunci: pembangunan, kajian pembangunan, sains pembangunan, disiplin akademik, Persatuan Sains Sosial Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Much has been written on the problematic state of development studies, particularly regarding contestations on the nature and concept of development studies, as well as its practicability or relevance to society. Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, for example, asserts that development studies have been too geared and axled on economy. This may not augur well for the continued existence of development studies as an academic discipline in Malaysia. Abdul Rahman Embong, however, maintains that development studies is alive, only that it is entering a *cul-de-sac*. There is hope, nevertheless, for development studies to make its presence more conspicuous and relevant in Malaysia as an academic discipline as well as in its role as an agency to bring about good change, social justice and sustainable development.²

Kothari (2005, 3) writes that “understandings of the nature and concept of development studies are as varied, multiple and contentious as definitions of what constitutes development itself ... That development studies is open to varying and contesting interpretations is evident from ongoing discussions among those in relevant academic departments, institutions and associations.” These diverse views, Kothari notes, concern fundamental questions regarding what development studies is or should be, ranging from opinions as to whether it is primarily about academic research or more concerned with policy and practical relevance, whether it possesses a specific

epistemology and methodology, and the extent to which it is multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary or cross-disciplinary. These contesting points of view reflect competing understandings about the purpose of development and the nature of the relationship between theories and ideologies, policies and practices.

Hettne (1990) provides substantive commentaries and analyses on the contemporary dilemmas of development, focusing specifically on the crisis in development theory, the theoretical status of the concept of development itself, crises in the real world (or worlds) and the institutional crisis of the state. According to Hettne (1990, 9), our incapacity to correctly understand the phenomenon of crisis in the context of the development process is an indictment of the social sciences in general and 'development studies' in particular. As development is a process, it is therefore pertinent to understand development problems within their own contexts that are in different historical and geographical contexts, as portrayed by the title of his book, "the three worlds".

Rahimah (2004, 10) too comments on the problematic assumptions of development theorists who assume that countries wanting development should walk the path of 'developed countries'. What is regarded as 'good' for developed countries is regarded likewise for all 'developing countries'. Hence, to achieve the level of development enjoyed by the developed countries, the developing countries would have to undergo the same development process and experiences. These developing countries were therefore denied their history.

People do not just live in a society; they produce the society in order to live (Carrithers 1992, 1). Human society thus has a history and a past that has shaped the present and potentially, the future. Changes imposed onto a society in the name of development without contextualising with the local history and local conditions of the local people might cause more harm than good. Human beings are reflective and thinking people. To present human beings of a particular community or region as 'undeveloped' or 'underdeveloped' and the assumption that to 'develop', they need external help is to deny the essential human capacity to change, adapt and develop (Carrithers 1992, 9). There is also a misperception that some people have the capacity to change and develop while

others are without this capacity and will only undergo these processes with outside intervention.

Development studies, flourishing in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, did not seem to enjoy prominence in the 1980s and 1990s. It was said to be facing *impasse* (Schuurman 1993), even eclipse or dead end (Abdul Halim & Abdul Hadi 1999, 1). Such lament resonates into the 21st century as illustrated by Abdul Rahman's (2006, 1) statement:

After its heyday in the 1960s and 1970s with the development agenda being high on the list and the state playing a developmentalist role, the idea of development – together with development studies as its corpus of knowledge and intellectual soul – came under the ferocious onslaught of neoliberal globalisation since the 1980s. The resulting 'big push' towards liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation in policy and the pervasive influence of the neoliberal ideology on scholarship with its thesis of the minimalist role and the retreat of the state, has resulted in the undermining of the development agenda and in pushing development studies into a cul-de-sac.

Hettne (1990, 9) offers this explanation: during the 1980s, development studies faced external and internal challenges. Externally, it was challenged by a fundamentalist, mono-disciplinary trend in the academic world, and a neoconservative trend in politics. Both trends reduce the 'development problem' in a highly simplistic way, thus neglecting the insights achieved in the field during three decades of empirical and theoretical explorations into previously unknown territories. To this should be added persistent suspicions in Third World academic communities about the relevance of Western development research, suspicions that can only be reinforced by the trends just mentioned. Internally, many established truths and conventional wisdoms have been questioned and abandoned in the course of its development.

Rahimah (2004, 11) surmises that such discussions and debates related to development show that development issues are as important and relevant to the state and society today as they were before. On the same vein, Berma & Junaenah (2004, 43) argue that development studies is undoubtedly pertinent and relevant as it focuses on issues and problems of less developed countries in the post World War II.

Problems facing development and development studies highlight the need to reflect and rethink on the substantive matters of development. This reflection and rethinking will bring us back to the core questions of: what is ‘development’?; how is ‘development’ defined and understood by the various parties concerned?; ‘development’ for whom? Indeed, Hettne (1990, 9) maintains that debate in development studies in the 1980s has been fruitful from the point of view of breaking through deceptive concepts and theories.

Before, elephants attacked us, now it is development, a Semai male laments (Nicholas n.d., 15). *If we don’t plant (oil palm), our land will be taken away*, an Iban longhouse dweller explains (Dimbab 2006). Such statements from indigenous people of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak illustrate the opposing points of view among individuals and institutions, of what development is or constitutes. Brosius (1993, 24) provides another illustration in his article on the Penans of Sarawak, Malaysia. He examines the process by which the Penan landscape has become commodified and how it is portrayed by the respective parties: the Penan themselves, Sarawak state & Malaysian federal governments, and Malaysian & Western environmentalists. Each party has its own rhetorical constructions of the Penans and the rainforests. Citing the case of Western environmentalists who, in the name of conservation and saving the Penans, portray them as “shy, gentle forest-dwelling and loincloth-wearing Penans,” Brosius argues that these environmentalists saw their intervention in the Penan issue as their right as citizens of the Earth: “It is your country but our planet.”

Rethinking development, and development studies is pertinent because, as Rahimah (2004, 9) asserts, despite the various development achievements, there are still many issues and problems that need to be addressed. The development process can be said to be unsuccessful in achieving its objectives to generate growth and promote well-being among the majority of the world’s population in view of the continued presence of age-old old problems such as poverty and inequality, unemployment and social dislocation (Rahimah 2004, 9 & 10). To this list we may add rising crime rates, increasing fear and insecurity, ethnic and religious tensions as well as devaluation of human rights and human dignity.

For Kothari (2005, 1) and her fellow contributors, the path to rethinking about development and development studies calls for a radical but critical approach towards understanding the dilemmas of development and development studies. A radical approach will include plural conceptions of development history and a critical approach engages with the orthodoxies of development theory and practice.

Kothari (2005, 3) further maintains that the contesting viewpoints about development and development studies “have cohered around debates on the distinctiveness of development studies as a field of academic study. There is a general agreement that development studies cannot claim to be a distinct and separate academic discipline in the same way as for example, economic or geography, partly because it is a relatively new field of study”. According to Kothari (2005, 3), development studies are cross-disciplinary, engaging with different bodies of theory, conceptual and methodological frameworks, and understandings of policy relevance and practical implications. It is this borrowing and application of ideas from different disciplines that to some extent provides the distinctive characteristics of development studies.

Kothari’s point of view corresponds with Hettne’s (1990, 4) understanding of development studies as a problem-oriented, applied and interdisciplinary field, analysing social change in a world context, but with due consideration to the specificity of different societies in terms of history, ecology, culture, etc.

Kothari’s assertion that “there is a general agreement that development studies cannot claim to be a distinct and separate academic discipline in the same way as for example, economic or geography, partly because it is a relatively new field of study” fittingly draws attention to the subject matter of this article - a historical appraisal of development studies as an academic discipline in institutions of higher learning.

DEVELOPMENT STUDIES OR DEVELOPMENT SCIENCE? GENESIS OF ARTICLE

Before continuing the discussion further, we need to provide some historical background for this article. The motivation to write an article on a historical appraisal of development studies as an academic discipline comes from our experience as lecturers of a program called Development Science Program (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) - restructured

from a faculty called Faculty of Development Science (1984-2001). Throughout our career in the Faculty of Development Science (FSP) and later, Development Science Program (PSP), we have been approached by students who found themselves offered a place in a faculty or program they have never heard about! Uppermost in their minds were: *What is FSP/PSP? What job can I do with this degree?* Indeed, as graduates of mono-disciplinary fields (Ong in Anthropology & Sociology, and Sarmila in Accounting) with no exposure to “development science” or “development studies”, it was not easy to provide convincing answers to these questions. We learnt “on the job” about what our faculty/program is through the Prospectus and explanations by our former Dean (H.M. Dahlan) and senior lecturers.

In the course of getting to know development science, and unavoidably, development studies, one persistent question that came to mind is: why was our faculty called “Faculty of Development Science” and not “Faculty of Development Studies”? Countries and universities world-wide have centres or institutes of development studies (for example, Institute of Development Studies [IDS], Sussex, England), offering degrees in development studies, or the research centre, Institute of Development Studies, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah). From the literature, we encounter numerous publications on development studies, but very rarely do we read about development science. The inevitable question then emerges: why *development science* when it is hardly mentioned in the literature on development? What moved the founders of FSP to establish such a faculty, thus making *development science* an academic discipline like any other discipline in the social sciences and humanities? How did the founders define development science, and how did they distinguish it from development studies?

Berma & Junaenah (2004, 43 & 58), in their article on the relevance, directions and destination of Development Studies, used our Faculty of Development Science as a case of discussion, but they did not explain what “development science” is as opposed to ‘development studies’. For example, the writers note that “the Faculty was sensitive and had responded to the need to put Development Studies in the right perspective ... As a consequence, the Faculty was less biased towards material factors and it takes into account the human and cultural factors of development and the role of civil society. The epistemology of Development Studies considers the Malaysian social characteristics

(historically and culturally), integrating theories that are relevant to the Asian region as an important entity in global development of the twenty first century.”

How can we understand “development science” and development studies”, their relationship and difference, from the statements above?

The organisers of MSC5 have also given attention to “development studies” and not “development science” as reflected in one of the conference’s main themes – *the future of development studies; the fate of development studies*. Hence, MSC5’s special focus on development and development studies provides a golden opportunity for us to deepen our understanding, not only with regard to the genesis of the Faculty of Development Science, but also, the concepts of development, development studies and development science, and their connectedness with one another. Further to this understanding is the motivation to reflect on the question, “where do we go from here”? As pointed out by Sutlive in his keynote address at the Borneo Research Conference held in Kuching (July 31-August 1, 2006), “we cannot move a step beyond unless we know where we are”. To add to Sutlive’s observation, we want to say that we would not know where we are unless we know where we came from - our past, our history.

DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AND DEVELOPMENT SCIENCE: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS OF ‘HOMEGROWN’ THEORISTS

While reflecting on the questions posed above on development science vis-à-vis development studies, we thought about the method for collecting information. After much deliberation, we decided to do a genealogy on the Faculty of Development Science (FSP) so as to place in perspective the position of development science in relation to development studies. Doing a genealogy would require us to seek those individuals involved in the setting up of FSP in the 1980s. Two significant individuals most associated with FSP, Arwah H.M. Dahlan and Arwah Ishak Shari, were no longer with us. Three key individuals currently with Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) came to our mind: Prof. Dato’ Dr Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, Prof. Dato’ Abdul Rahman Embong and Prof. Dato’ Dr Abdul Samad Hadi. Inspired by our quest to know the genesis of FSP through individuals directly involved, we contacted these three Professors and requested

for interviews. In spite of their heavy work schedule, the Professors agreed to be interviewed and share their historical experiences and professional expertise with us. Thus, on 24th April 2006, 24th May 2006 and 31st May 2006, we conducted our interview sessions with these three ‘Greats’ of development (science and studies) – Prof. Shamsul (ATMA), Prof Abdul Rahman (IKMAS) and Prof Samad Hadi (LESTARI) respectively.

In the course of reviewing the literature, we chanced upon Kothari’s (2005) book mentioned above. She mentions that the book presents a critical genealogy of development studies through exploring changes in discourses about development and examining the contested evolution and role of development institutions by focusing upon the recollections of those who teach, research and practise development. *By focusing upon the recollections of those who teach, research and practise development* – we were happy to note that we too used this approach for our article. Three contemporary and eminent Professors who were and still are very much involved in the teaching, research and practice of development studies, as well as in development science, became our ‘subjects’.

The discussion that follows will then be a presentation of the recollections, experiences and ideas of these Professors as expressed during the interview sessions. We addressed three basic questions to our distinguished ‘subjects’: (1) their knowledge on the genesis of FSP; (2) how do they define development studies and development science; and (3) how do they perceive the future of development science and development studies.

On the Genesis of FSP

To understand the genesis of FSP, we need to first distinguish development studies from development science. According to Prof. Shamsul, development studies represent the orientation of people who study problems arising from economic development. People who study these problems arising from economic development are development students and their discipline or corpus of knowledge came to be known as “development studies.” However, as their main focus is on the material impacts of economic development, development studies became something like “impact studies.”

This emphasis on economic development and the material impacts of economic development by development studies unavoidably gave rise to the following questions:

what about the non-material impacts of economic development, and what about non-economic development, the humanities component – for example, the impact on intellectual development, spiritual development, human dignity and well-being?

Hence, the idea of a *development science* emerged out of the efforts of concerned individuals who saw the need to combine the *social science* component (development studies) with the *humanities* component (impact of development on human beings from both the material and non-material aspects). This effort became known as Development Science – the science that combine the social science and humanities components of the impact of development on human beings and their social milieu.

Prof. Rahman draws attention to the history with regards to the corpus of knowledge. In the beginning, knowledge is integral but later, it was parcelled up into the natural sciences, humanities and social sciences. This third science, *social science*, rather than the humanities, was very much influenced by the positivist thinking of the 19th century, as represented by Auguste Comte and the philosophers of the era. These philosophers thought that if we could have a science of nature, we could also have a science of society. By this is meant we can use the rigours of the scientific method to study society and people. If nature can be studied using the scientific method (that is, objectively and in a detached manner), human society too can be studied using the scientific method. The science of society will then be called *social science*. Later, social thinkers such as Max Weber argued that human societies and human beings could not be studied like scientists studied nature, using positivistic methods, principally because human societies are complex, and human beings are endowed with the capacity to think and create meanings.

In Malaysia, the introduction of social science from the 19th century to present time in universities began with University Malaya in Singapore in the 1950s, and when the university moved to Kuala Lumpur, was located in the Faculty of Arts, in the Anthropology and Sociology Department.

In 1970s, social science developed with the setting up of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Sains Malaysia. Development, however, became a big issue after the Second World War because of two factors: (i) the demand for development by newly emerging independent countries, and (ii) the western bloc wanted to ensure that these

newly independent countries did not go to the Soviet bloc. Hence the West tried their best to entice these newly independent countries with the idea of ‘development’, especially economic development, and the promise of aid. The late 1940s, according to Prof. Rahman, saw the emergence of development studies, but with emphasis on economics and economic development.

This over-emphasis on economic development brought to prominence the significance of industrialisation, modernisation and urbanisation as factors for economic development. The result of this shift in mode of production (from agriculture, fishing, hunting, gathering) to industrialisation and modernisation is a “big push” towards liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation (Abdul Rahman 2006, 1). For Prof. Rahman, it would take a revolution to shift the idea of development from a very economic approach to a more humanistic or social as well as a wholesome or comprehensive approach. A humanistic approach would result in a more holistic and sustainable approach, which places emphasis not only on human and societal well-being and happiness, but also environmental well-being (Abdul Rahman 2005). Prof. Rahman asserts that “well-being” and “happiness” are two very important components to be considered when we measure development.

Prof. Samad Hadi also notes that the idea of development studies emerged particularly after the Second World War. America, Europe, Australia, representing the “advanced or developed” countries, wanted to study the processes, trends, problems, issues, directions of development. Hence, they developed theories, approaches, and methodologies to study development. In Malaysia, development thinkers wanted to study development too but the question posed is, how were they going to study development? Were they going to adopt the Western model or Latin American, African, Asian models, among others? Prof. Samad surmises that in their early discussions, they agreed that their goal was not to study development per se, but also to study development “scientifically.”

The next question posed was, so what is/are to be studied scientifically and what is the methodology that can be used to study society scientifically? In order to study development in society scientifically, there must be concepts, theory, models, approaches – which function as building blocks for the theoretical orientation in the study of

development. According to Prof. Samad Hadi, applying the rigours of science (concept, theory, model) to the study of development is development science.

The *Faculty of Development Science* was formulated in the 1970s and launched in 1984 with this premise in mind - to focus on the scientific study of development, but especially for Sabah, not Peninsular Malaysia. Members of the faculty were supposed to study the economic, social, politics, cultural, etc. of the society, and from this understanding, they were to program a strategic plan for the people. Unfortunately, the political upheaval in Sabah in 1991 changed the future of the Faculty of Development Science.³

According to Prof. Samad Hadi, there was a problem when FSP came back to UKM Bangi. There were many faculties and departments at UKM doing 'development.' FSP also had no principal coordinator to reposition its vision and direction from one focused on Sabah to one focusing on Peninsular Malaysia, in particular. Before concrete repositioning could take place within FSP, restructuring was imposed and in 2001, FSP became a subset of the newly established faculty, the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities.⁴

Conceptual Understanding of Development Studies and Development Science

Prof. Shamsul reiterates the need to view development in a larger context, that is, social change, and to use social change theories to understand development process and planning. In the international world, development plans began to make their presence after the Second World War in the 1940s. The War caused much destruction and suffering to the colonial governments of Europe such as Britain, France, Holland, Belgium and Spain. At the same time, they were losing control over their respective colonies in the East and Africa. These colonies were demonstrating a unified expression of nationalism and determination to be free from their respective colonisers. As the country not directly and adversely affected by the Second World War, the United States of America emerged as the "saviour" to the European countries devastated by the war. Reconstruction of their respective countries with the assistance of America revolved around economic reconstruction. Through the Marshall Plan, America provided large

amounts of reconstruction funds to Europe with the understanding that Europe and their colonies would open their doors to American capital and investment.

The year 1954 witnessed the establishment of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IRBD), which later became the World Bank. This was followed by the formation of the International Monetary (IMF).

In Malaysia, the word ‘development’ was first used when Tun Abdul Razak established the Ministry of Rural Development in 1959. According to Prof. Shamsul, in the 1950s, there were two distinct modes of development thought: (i) represented by the government/administration who saw development as a form of public advocacy and policy. The government formulated policies for economic development, beginning with the Draft for Development Planning in 1950; (ii) represented by the academic world, who saw development as an academic subject, and later emerged as a critique against the emphasis on the economy in development planning (or economic development).

Several key thinkers played significant role in the rethinking of emphasis on development planning, to the extent of bringing the non-economic aspects of development to the forefront of development and development planning. Among these great development thinkers were Prof. Emeritus Ungku Aziz (Universiti Malaya), Syed Hussein Alattas (Universiti Malaya), Syed Husin Ali (Universiti Malaya), H.M. Dahlan, Ishak Shari, Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, and Abdul Rahman Embong (all from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia).

Prof. Shamsul reminisces about Ungku Aziz making famous his “sarong index” as an indicator of poverty through his *Rural Development and Change* courses. Syed Husin Ali puts development studies on the academic map through his *Modernisation and Peasantry Studies* courses. In 1963, Syed Husin Ali, working through the Department of Malay Studies in Universiti Malaya, introduced development studies in the context of rural development, with high political consciousness content and a bias towards the political left. In Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, H.M. Dahlan, a student of Syed Husin Ali, began to seriously reflect on the need to integrate all the material and non-material components in studies on the impact of economic development on society and human beings. This reflection planted the seeds of a “science of development”, later to be known as “Development Science.” This development science perspective calls for the integration

of both social science (material) and humanities (non-material) components in the study of development. Towards this end, Dahlan advocated a multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approach in studying development and the material as well as the non-material impacts of development.

Unfortunately, the multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary nature of development science that characterises development science sows the seeds of its own destruction. Unable to sustain the integration of the various disciplines in the study of development due to lack of clear conceptual understanding of development, common theoretical orientations and approaches, and methodologies, each of the discipline in development science became a separate entity or subject matter by itself. For example, economics went back to its economic base; environmental studies became a field of its own and did not see itself under the umbrella of “development science.”

An enduring feature of human society is social change, hence, in the study of society, two very important components that need to be studied are social change and development. The advocators of development science assert that this study of social change and development can be done scientifically. Development however cannot be compartmentalised. Like a pebble thrown into the ocean, the ripples will impact all corners of the ocean in one way or another. Hence, development cannot be seen as economic per se, or social per se, culture per se, environmental or geographical per se, which seem to be orientation of development studies. In short, development and development studies cannot be “pigeon-holed.” So, how do “development scientists” overcome this problem of “monodisciplinary compartmentalisation” and work towards multi-disciplinary integration? The reflection on this problem laid the foundation for the emergence of development science. In the beginning, development science tried to integrate all these (mono) disciplines. But in the 1960s, 1970s, or even early 1980s, the term “development science” was not popular. How then did the theorists and advocators sell their idea of development as a science, that is, development science?

According to Prof. Rahman, it was in this context that the idea of development or development studies was conceptualised as “development science”, because it adheres to the rigours of the scientific discipline. The term ‘science’ however is not that rigid.

Although it has the rigours of scientific method, it also has the interpretive or subjective approach in appreciating development.

On the use of development science and not development studies for the Faculty of Development Science, as Prof. Rahman understands it, it is because policy makers did not want to hear “development studies.” They were more convinced if they heard “science” for development, that is, development as a science. Administrators and planners feel more comfortable when they deal with something scientific, like *development science*, rather than something amorphous called *development studies*. From the standpoint of knowledge, development science is a corpus of knowledge that involved the development of society and written by human beings for the progress of humankind, using the rigours of scientific methods.

Society is very complex and when we mention development, we need to know how we understand development, and how we measure development. We also need to identify what the goals of development are and for whom. As such, development efforts cannot be constrained by economic perspective alone, or targeted at one section of the society only. The end result of a developed society is not material development, hence, economic development and growth cannot be the ultimate goal of development. Gross National Product (GNP) can be used as a measure of economic development but it cannot represent the overall development of the society. The ultimate goal of development, according to Prof. Rahman, is the people’s well-being, which includes better quality of life, higher standard of living and general happiness.⁵

Thus, it makes no difference in the study and aim of development, whether the orientation is development studies or development science. More importantly, we should ask whether human beings and their well-being are the focus of development. In other words, does development cause human beings to be benefactors or victims of development? The lamentations of the Semai man and the Iban longhouse dwellers cited above indicate that changes done in the name of development have brought more harm than blessing to the people, destroying their very existence and sustenance.

Future of development science and development studies

Where does Development Science go from here? For Prof. Shamsul, the outlook for the future of development science does not look too promising. In fact, Prof. Shamsul hints at the demise of development science (as seen through the downgrading of the Faculty of Development Science to a mere Development Science Programme per se) through the breakaway of its component disciplines. This downgrading or rather, “under-development” of development science as an academic discipline in institutions of higher learning not only signifies the loss of importance and relevance of development science. It also indicates the government/administration’s emphasis on economic development or the material aspects of development, that is, industrialisation and modernisation.

Back to the idea of development as a “science,” one question arises: *can we study development as a science?* Development, as growing from “development studies,” is a multi-disciplinary academic discipline incorporating various disciplines such as economy (economic development), sociology (sociology of development), anthropology (anthropology of development), politics (political development), and communication (communication development), among others. Consequently, development studies became compartmentalised into and supported by respective disciplines.

Prof. Rahman surmises that the goal of people studying development should not be just theorising about concepts, theories and approaches. They should also be able to use this theorising to influence policy makers so that these policy makers would be sensitised to the need for a human-centred, holistic and integrated approach when they formulate development policies. Hence, it does not matter whether the study of development is called development studies or development science. What matters is the subject matter and the corpus of knowledge of what we call the study of development.

Thus, the question that emerges out of this restructuring: is development science relevant now? Prof. Samad Hadi’s response is that development science and development studies is still relevant today, in Malaysia and world-wide. However, this assertion of relevance has to be accompanied by concrete views on how to apply this relevance of development science and development studies in contemporary world. Development science and development studies cannot stand on its old platform of focusing on

modernisation, rural-urban poverty, and under-development. Development science programmes and studies on development need to readjust and accommodate emerging phenomena, such as globalisation, liberalisation of borders, deregulation of state power, the dominance of capital and foreign direct investment, as well as the fluidity of human movement across borders, among others.

Prof. Samad Hadi observes that we need to rethink our development theories and approaches. Should we continue to adopt external models or should we find a new way, a *third way* of understanding, doing and studying development? A new way or third way is essential, according to Prof. Samad Hadi, so that we can design our development science or development studies program that take into account emerging contemporary issues. A good starting point to ground this third way is to ask ourselves, *what is good or relevant for the people?* By asking this question, we will begin to think from the perspective of the people, and this is the essence of the “third way” – the views of the people themselves. However, we will not be able to do this if we do not know what the people concerned are thinking. Hence, we need to go back to the people and discover what they really want from development. How do we do this? We go to the people, learn their language, culture, and values, live with them for a while. From here, we can develop a model appropriate to their needs, conditions and suggest suitable solutions. Researchers should go and stay with the people, know the situation, and know what to ask. This research will then be grounded on the people’s experience. From this type of grounded research, we can come up with a new way of looking at things. Therefore we can be more responsible for the conclusion/solution and uphold our intellectual integrity.

This, according to Prof. Samad Hadi, is the basis of development science – applying objective methods of understanding development through the eyes of the subjects themselves. This then is the *Third Way!*

Prof. Samad Hadi poses some pertinent questions in our effort to understand development science and development studies:

- Where is development science/studies heading?
- What are the basic assumptions?
- What is the epistemology (corpus of knowledge)?
- What is the methodology?

The fact that societies are changing and developing means development science and development studies are still relevant today. Changes in the lives of people, societies and environment provide the substance for the study of development. But what should be the corpus of knowledge or epistemology to help us study development? Is it to be based on economics, and the modernisation model of development, or world systems model? Or if we want an integrated approach, what is this integrated approach? What corpus of knowledge can we provide to our students through our development science program that students can participate in development debates and articulate their points of views from the corpus of knowledge provided by our program? The right corpus of knowledge will result in right methodology. Our students need to be taught how to see things at the ground. They need to be taught how to generate the right questions, use the right methodology, and offer the right explanations so as to get the right solutions. On the other hand, generating the wrong questions will result in wrong assumptions, wrong methodology, ending in wrong explanations, conclusions and solutions.

OVERVIEW OF REFLECTIONS

The question posed earlier, *where do we go from here*, and Prof. Samad Hadi's question, *where are we taking development studies/development science*, indicate the seriousness of the need to rethink development in the context of finding a new approach, paradigm or model of development science or development studies.

All three Professors interviewed share the common point of view that issues of development form a part of everyday life and at times, these issues impact the lives of people in a very negative way. In view of this scenario, studies on development and its resultant issues and impacts are still relevant in this 21st century. Thus, whether we prefer to call this 'study of development' as "development studies" or "development science," it does not make a real difference if we are clear about our real focus of "development." Prof. Samad Hadi has forwarded a provocative follow-up question on the relevance of development studies/science: relevant for what? If development and the study of development are based on the old paradigm, that is, based on the biasness of planners and administrators on economic development and the socio-economic agenda, then development studies/science are not relevant. A non-holistic, but one-sided approach will

cause negative transformations and impacts on the social, cultural, environmental conditions of the people of a country, region and world. Approaches, models, theories and studies on development that are not grounded on the people's historical and contemporary experiences, conditions and aspirations will be like a tree without roots, without promise of sustainable growth and well-being.

Development in the modern world is identified with modernisation, with economic growth and progress. To be developed means to be industrialised, modernised and technologically advanced; to be underdeveloped means the opposite. Development assumes an evolutionary, linear progression from a backward, undignified, underdeveloped condition towards a dominant, dignified and developed condition. When a society or community thinks it needs development, it implies that the people believe they are economically underdeveloped and backward. They believe that they should go through the same process, the same stages of growth and acquire the same material resources as the advanced, Western countries. The idea of *having more* (in material terms) instead of *being more* (in non-material or spiritual terms) comes to personify the rich versus the poor (Rahnema quoted in Sachs 1992, 172). Esteva (quoted in Sachs 1992, 23) argues that this need to *have more* creates a false dependence among the community members on outside intervention.

In the Malaysian scenario, what is the premise for development, development science and development studies? What are the common historical and contemporary experiences, conditions, values and aspirations that can bind Malaysians from diverse backgrounds so that they share a common vision of what development is, goals of development and how to achieve these goals. Recent events in Malaysia in connection with political, economic, social, cultural, language, education, religion, land rights, human dignity, human rights issues reflect the divisiveness of the Malaysian society. How then can the idea of development be applicable to all Malaysians embroiled in these issues?

To quote Prof. Samad Hadi, *what is the basic cultural value as a Malaysian when we emphasise on development?* The political significance of ethnic identities in development policies, for example, precludes the cultivation of a common value towards development. Can our development studies/science program free itself from this ethnic

identity premise or paradigm? As asked by Prof. Samad Hadi, can it be premised on a Malaysian identity, a Malaysian value? Thus, in the effort to reflect on where do we go from here, we need to ask ourselves, what is the premise of our development, development studies and development science.

In the light of this scenario, Hettne's (1990, 29) proposal to use the concept of *nation-building* as a key to understanding what mainstream development has been all about as well as its present crisis, might be food for reflection for the case of Malaysia. As Hettne observes, development has at best really meant a strengthening of the material base of the state mainly through industrialisation, adhering to a pattern that has been remarkably similar from one country to another. This mainstream model has been enforced by the security interests of the ruling elite. In the mainstream model there are consequently potential conflicts, primarily between competing states within the interstate system and secondly, between on the one hand, state power, and on the other, sub-national groups challenging the legitimacy of the state.

Nation-building using development as a tool to protect the interests of the ruling elite and segments of the population that support the ruling elite may do great injustice to other segments of the population who principally just want to have a stable, secure, happy and harmonious life in the country they call they home.

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² Both Shamsul's and Abdul Rahman's views were expressed in a Roundtable Discussion on "Development and Well-Being in a Global Context", organised by Institut Kajian Oksidental (IKON), on 9 March 2006, at Bilik Wacana, ATMA, UKM Bangi.

³ FSP shifted to Sabah in June 1990, and together with the Faculty of Science and Natural Resources (FSSA), formed the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Sabah Campus (UKMS). Relocation of FSP to Sabah was planned at the outset, the major rationale being to avoid duplication with existing social science-based faculties at the main campus in Bangi, Selangor. The changing political situation of Sabah beginning 1991,

culminating with the state elections in February 1994, saw the closing of UKMS to make way for the setting up of a new university for the state of Sabah. In June 1996, staff and students of both FSP and FSSA returned to UKM Bangi.

⁴ On 15 November 2001, a new faculty called the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (FSSK), was formed out of the restructuring of three existing faculties – Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Faculty of Development Science and Faculty of Language Studies. FSSK has six ‘Schools’ under its wing, and each School has three programmes respectively. Development Science Programme, together with Geography Programme and Anthropology & Sociology Programme, is now located in the School of Social, Development and Environmental Studies.

⁵ Bhutan, spearheaded by its King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, has formulated a “Gross National Happiness” (GNH) in which Gross National Product (GNP) has been replaced by GNH as a measurement of the country’s development. The King of Bhutan felt it necessary to define development in terms of happiness of its people, rather than in terms of an abstract economic measurement such as GNP (Gross International Happiness n.d.).