



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI



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## IDS Founding Day: Seminars on Development Debates

### Theme - Development in Africa: Reimagining the past and living the present

Date: October 8, 2020

#### Introduction

The Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Nairobi, was established on October 8, 1965 as part of the then University of East Africa. Since its inception, IDS has carried out research on issues of development with a deliberate bias for Kenya and Africa’s experience. There has been collaboration with partners globally to produce knowledge and to influence policy and practice. Several objectives have guided the conduct of research at IDS: policy relevance; development studies disciplinary growth; need to generate interdisciplinary knowledge; response to desire for collaborative networks; meeting demand for world class research and academic publications; and the need to produce high quality teaching materials.

IDS will host a series of seminars **throughout October 2020 starting from Thursday October 8, 2020** to commemorate the Institute’s founding day. The seminars will comprise presentations by renowned scholars and researchers. The discussions will pay particular attention to the state of development in Africa from the 60s to the present. The seminars will also devote attention to the Kenya debate of the 70s and 80s with a focus on **‘what went right’ and ‘what has gone wrong’**.

#### Debating the challenges to development and possibilities for a new development era

The proposed IDS 2020 debate in these seminars is unique due to the circumstances around the world today. Inequalities and poverty continue to deepen in the global south. Imbalances in development constrain Africa’s progress. However, inequality is not a new challenge in Africa or Kenya. But in Kenya, inequality has deepened and has escalated more in the recent years. This situation of deepening inequality is reflected in many other countries in Africa. Post-colonial governments in Africa have not impacted on development in a

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manner that would lift many people from poverty. Across the continent, governments behave the same: limited investments in public goods; exclusion in distribution of political power; and curtailing people’s livelihood choices, more so for the poor.

The IDS 2020 theme, Development in Africa: **Reimagining the past and living the present**, is relevant to challenges facing our society today. The theme will help in reflection on where Kenya, and Africa in general, is coming from, the state of development today, and look to the future. The discussions will explore: What went wrong and what should be done to correct it? How can future generations avoid falling into the now well-known challenges – if at all?



## Development Studies and post-COVID-19 Development

Development in the last 55 years has witnessed shifts in meanings and practices. Theoretical perspectives have continued to grapple with the challenge of 'what is development' and 'what should be done to address the root causes of poverty' among other challenges. IDS proposes to use the 2020 conference/events to discuss development studies and role in development – past, present and future. The discussions will also focus on the post-Covid19 development thinking.

The event is deliberately set to take advantage of the convergence of intellectual and policy initiatives around the ongoing debates on development and development studies to review its trajectory and discuss new or different ways of thinking about development while upholding IDS traditional bias for Kenya and Africa in general. The conference will not only aspire to provide a prospective look into reimagining development, but will also reflect on the history of IDS, the idea of development it has articulated, and find a pathway for an intellectual agenda for IDS.

We shall invite leading scholars, policymakers, practitioners and students of development to join us for a series of intellectual debates about these challenges and their implications. Critical questions to be asked, include:

- How can a more equal, sustainable, inclusive, just, and secure African society – and Kenya for that matter - be achieved?
- How can knowledge be created, flows mobilised and utilized better for Africa's sustainable development? And how should development studies, and the roles

and relationships IDS and similar institutions, transform to address the challenges of inequality?

- What has changed in the last 55 years what lessons do we learn from this period?
- What would a new era of development look like, and can it be realised?

### The seminars will be organized around the following thematic areas

- I. Development Theory and Practice: Development Policy 50 years on
- II. Development and the Academy - Present and Future: what has been the role of development studies?
- III. The challenges of policy relevance: Knowledge dissemination and networking
- IV. Prospects for Improved Development and Governance in Kenya

### Expected Outputs

- a) Expert state of the art presentations on thematic areas of development theory and practice; development and the academy; and governance and development challenges in Kenya.
- b) Publication of proceedings into Working Papers; and an academic book for tertiary education.
- c) Post-conference scholarly debates/workshops for graduate students and researchers.
- d) Policy briefs

REGISTRATION IS FREE

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The series of seminars will be virtual

**Institute for Development Studies (IDS), University of Nairobi**

P.O. Box 30197-00100, Nairobi – Kenya; **Telephone:** +254 (0) 20 4910000 | **Mobile:** 0772114655

**Email:** director-ids@uonbi.ac.ke | **URL:** ids.uonbi.ac.ke

**Email:** IDS-UoNat50@uonbi.ac.ke | **CC:** karuti.kanyinga@uonbi.ac.ke |  @IDS\_UONBI