Editorial What Next?

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This 47th volume of *Development* has grappled with several key issues that bring out our modern day concern on how to survive uncertainty. The first issue took up the violence of development – the insecurity and uncertainty big-scale development projects create among different communities. Activists, ecologists and researchers queried how the economically poor and displaced cope with loss of habitat, livelihoods and the sharp challenges to their cultural traditions. The second issue looked at the politics of health – how globalization is leading to new forms of health policy concerns. It examined how health systems are struggling with the new pandemics, moving populations and failing resources for health nationally and transnationally and asked questions about how to respond. The third issue, focusing on corporate social responsibility, debated if the private sector is adapting better to the opportunities and failures of the market in a more efficient and creative way than state actors and whether corporate actors can take a lead in ensuring a just economic development in the future.

In this issue 'Surviving Uncertainty' we go to the heart of what this volume and indeed what the last years of *Development* have been questioning – how do we survive a rapidly changing and complex world given the current crisis of ideas, the level of uncertainty in an era where so many have lost faith in the government, religion and ideology of right or left. *Development* has probed these concerns in various ways – from the point of view of local community, development policy, southern and northern political perspectives, cultural and gender concerns, ecological and institutional failures. In setting up these conversations the journal aimed to listen to different stakeholders on how they perceived the changes going on around, reflecting various points of view. The goal was to take on board the positive and negative side of 'development' writ large.

Parallel to the journal's musings has been over the last years, with the Government of Italy and the Ford Foundation's contribution, SID's exploration of 'scenarios' as an approach and tool to face the various social, political and economic crises with a focus

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on Africa. It seems timely as the SID scenarios project team has just completed a series of scenarios exercises to bring those findings together in *Development*. The issue we hope will fulfil several goals: first to produce a unique resource on scenarios that marks SID's successful work in this area; second to introduce to readers scenarios as a useful tool with the expectation that there will be resonance and interest in what this crowd of scenarios practitioners are doing for many working in development; and thirdly, to provide for the practitioners themselves something of a 'state of the art' product that can further their own work in this exciting field.

As with other special issues this edition of *Development* also has a fourth almost unstated goal to create the space for further conversations that deepens an understanding across different parties. We feel that it is critical at this juncture to introduce *Development* readers to the world of public interest scenarios given the increased questioning and search for meaningful dialogue on 'what next'. If there is one seemingly obvious feature that runs through international relations and development, it is the preponderance of uncertainty and the implications of its heavy presence. SID's own interest in exploring scenario exercises in Eastern Africa in the mid-1990s was driven largely by the fact that far-reaching structural adjustments were being undertaken in various countries with seemingly scant concern for long-term impacts and the choices that some of these adjustments would inevitably foster. The absence of broad-based dialogue on these key issues was one indicator; but even then, the lack of common ground from which various stakeholders could embark on such conversations was even more striking. Could scenarios offer a means by which various facets of society could begin exploring alternative possible futures?

SID's first experiment in Kenya launched in 1998 was to prove a worthwhile and exciting adventure in helping bring together a number of people from across various divides, sectors and generations to talk about and explore options for the future of their country. Similar projects were launched in Tanzania in 2001 and Uganda in 2002. All projects have embraced an

ambitious public dissemination component to engage as broad a segment as possible of the national populations.

While these initiatives are not necessarily the first scenario-type activities carried out in these countries, their novelty resided in the fact that they were the first to involve actively a wide cross-section of interests, and from the uptake, seek to involve as many stakeholders as possible – hence the national dissemination campaigns.

Much has been learnt. The process in Eastern Africa has tested the boundaries of scenario-building methodology and most of all in how the outcomes of such processes – usually stories about alternative possible futures – can be packaged and distributed as broadly as possible. In virtually all instances, SID encountered a variety of reactions at the outset – ranging from excitement through to cynicism, amusement and even hostility. However, the end products never failed to provoke deep reflection and spark off conversations about what the possible meanings and relevance of the scenario stories were. What perhaps was more gratifying was the wide range of actors who wholeheartedly embraced the outcomes and took them on. Whether it was with the clergy, the technocracy, humble peasants, the military or activists, there was something in the scenarios for them.

Scenarios are in and of themselves part of a larger process. They merely contribute to helping clarify the thinking of those with the power to act – ultimately, each and every individual citizen. No doubt, there are those who will be looking for changes that can be directly attributed to the outcomes of scenario processes. This is much harder to prove. However, as the various contributors to this journal edition indicate in their articles, there is no doubt that scenario processes – and scenarios – have had profound impacts on those who have come in contact with them and altered their assumptions and perceptions about the present and the future – and therefore, we might argue, their actions.

More importantly, however, scenario processes can give participants a voice, an opportunity to share their hopes and fears and to help enlarge spaces from which actions that contribute to the common good can be taken. They can help improve participation – not just in quantitative

terms, but in qualitative terms as well. Given the rapid pace of change, we can be sure that as we face the future, uncertainty will remain a constant that actors of all shades and stripes around the world will have to grapple with. We will probably never be able to predict the future with any certainty, and therefore until then, tools such as scenarios will help sharpen our thinking and broaden our minds to the possibilities with which we might have to deal.

The journal issue provides an opportunity for *Development* readers to participate in that process. Guest Editor Barbara Heinzen has made an extraordinary effort to gather together exciting and challenging contributions as well as to give her own much valued insights into the scenario process. We hope that readers will gain as much as we did in working with her and the team of people contributing to this unique and path-breaking edition of *Development*.