

Towards 2025:

A report on consultations to develop DSAA's 5-year Strategy

Executive Summary

This report synthesises findings from consultations organised in September 2020 by the DSAA with members, academics and students from Development Studies programs in Australia. Across five consultations, we had 44 participants (29 academics and 14 students) from 18 universities. The purpose of the consultations was to seek input on a Five-year strategy for the DSAA, in alignment with our aims and objectives as well as the ambitions, needs and desires of our membership. The report outlines the key challenges and opportunities identified by participants, and suggestions for initiatives in teaching, research and engagement.

A key challenge is the 'identity problem' of Development Studies in Australia. There is little public knowledge about the field of Development Studies; and University engagements with 'global development' can occasionally betray ignorance about the field, thus risking putting off some prospective students, while setting up false expectations for others. People employed in the development sector often do not identify with Development Studies as a field of study. There is lack of recognition of the centrality of critical analysis and theory to Development Studies as a distinct field of study, and a continued perception of it as a 'practical' or 'policy oriented' field of study in the aid of 'development'. The DSAA would have an important role to play in defining the field and educating the public, policy makers, academics, and students about research, scholarship and teaching in Development Studies.

COVID-19 related disruptions and the consequent damaging cuts to the University sector in 2020 have brought additional new challenges, as academics are facing restructures involving staff and program cuts. Development Studies in Australia is also impacted by the return to an anti-aid agenda and a shrinking aid budget. Increased resource constraints in the development sector indirectly affect jobs, and therefore domestic enrolments.

Notwithstanding these challenges, there continue to be opportunities for Development Studies to flourish. Potential areas of growth are an ethically engaged focus on 'localisation', strategically leveraging engagement with the SDGs, and strengthening collaboration with regional (Asia-Pacific) institutions. We could also deepen our engagement with Indigenous knowledges and practices to inform how we decolonise development studies and identify new ways of 'doing development'.

Initiatives suggested in teaching included wide support for DSAA to take the lead in mapping a foundational core curriculum in Development Studies, that flexibly allowed universities to develop distinctive specialisations. Another priority was the development and sharing of pedagogic resources in development studies, including reading lists, case studies, and mini-lectures. Other suggestions included DSAA advocacy for skills/qualifications accreditation of Development Studies, reaching out to students in high schools, encouraging industry partners to co-sponsor courses, supporting teaching collaborations with universities in the Global South, and providing guidelines for ethical and non-exploitative work integrated learning, study abroad and student volunteer programs.

Research related initiatives included strong support for the establishment of thematic study groups, which could be linked to the creation of a database of researchers (in Australia and the region) by areas of expertise. Participants appreciated the biannual conference as an important opportunity to share research, but sought better alignment with existing conferences. Other suggestions included dissemination of research through podcasts, working papers, research to practice papers, research insight summaries, and open source publications.

An important engagement priority was for DSAA to build a community of solidarity and care, creating spaces for collaboration and mentoring of students and early career academics. Other suggested initiatives included: engaging with donors on the importance of local knowledge and developing a position statement on localisation; greater engagement with DFAT on funding priorities, and more effective use of social media. There was also support for semi-regular, focussed consultations with university representatives.

I. Preamble

The Development Studies Association of Australia was formally incorporated in March 2019. We held our first AGM and constituted our first committee in June 2019. In our first phase of operation, the DSAA has aimed to consolidate the association, grow our membership, and undertake several initiatives. Most of our work has been responsive (to both opportunities and challenges), pursuing work that is aligned with our core values and aims, but not necessarily strategic, that is, in support of medium to long-term strategic goals. Further, who the DSAA is, our identity, and what we mean to our members, is still in a nascent stage of evolution.

As we near our second AGM in November 2020, we are working towards developing a five-year strategy that will chart our future direction, aligned with our aims and objectives as well as the ambitions, needs and desires of our membership. To this end, over one week in September/October 2020, we held a series of consultations with members, academics and students from Development Studies programs across Australia. We had 44 participants over 5 sessions (1 for students), including 29 academics and 14 students, from 18 universities. Thank you to all the participants for graciously giving their time.

The conversations were free flowing, but aimed to address the following themes:

- a. How Development Studies is faring in the current context
- b. The challenges facing Development Studies in Australia
- c. Ways to grow Development Studies as a field of research and teaching
- d. DSAA strategic priorities
- e. Ongoing consultation

In this report, we provide a synthesis of the main findings against each of these themes, while also sharing some of the insights and ideas that came from participants. We start with the key challenges and opportunities identified by participants, before moving on to a discussion of suggestions for initiatives and priorities in the three areas of teaching, research and engagement. The findings from these consultations will be used by the next DSAA Committee in the development of the DSAA Strategic Plan, but we also hope that members may be inspired to take on some of the initiatives noted below.

Importantly, this report is oriented towards capturing most themes discussed, as a starting point for further investigation, conversations and decision making. There is no intent, or ability, to communicate a ‘consensus’ as to what the main challenges are, how they are best addressed, and what DSAA should do in the future. Further, the experiences of academics and students vary greatly across Australia, with numbers of students rising in some universities, at the same time they are at critical levels in another. The report should therefore be seen as an outcome of only the first step in consultation around the DSAA’s five-year strategic plan.

II. Challenges and opportunities

2020 has seen many challenges and upheavals both nationally and globally - in the bushfires, the COVID-19 pandemic, and anti-racism protests. COVID-19 had a detrimental impact to the higher education sector in Australia due to the disruptions in teaching and research, as well as drastic and damaging cuts to university funding as result of government policies. We outline below the key challenges and opportunities facing Development Studies in Australia, as identified by participants in the consultations.

Development Studies in Australia has an identity problem

Academics and students alike recounted the challenges of explaining what Development Studies is in Australia. Unlike in other countries, such as the UK, there is little public knowledge as to what the field of study is. Development Studies also has very little resonance in the home countries of international students, where

similar fields of study might be classified differently, for instance as social work, social policy or community development. Students love our programs and courses, but can take years to find us. There is little awareness of what studying development entails among High School students; people currently working in relevant Development Studies areas, especially in the public sector, often do not identify with the field of study, and therefore do not seek educational opportunities in DS Masters programs to advance their careers. University leadership often uses 'global development' and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for its own purposes, but without support for 'Development Studies' as a field of study. Worse, University engagements with 'development' can occasionally betray ignorance about the fundamentals of the field. Some marketing departments do not understand the field of international development (for example, clumping it with anthropology or political science), thus risking putting off some prospective students, while setting up false expectations for others.

Some participants pointed out that misperceptions of Development Studies also creates problems for the credibility of the field. The sense that it is a 'practical' field of study in the aid of 'development', or as policy oriented, persists. There is little recognition or awareness as to the centrality of critical analysis and theory to the field. This perception that Development Studies lacks theoretical rigor is not always inaccurate. There is an abundance of studies that focus on how to make development practice and programs better, rather than the critical explorations of 'development' as a set of processes and relations. Seen as a practice-based field, Development Studies is often treated as a way to generate revenue for cognate disciplines, with the disciplinary experts—anthropology, human geography, political science—tasked with the real intellectual work of scholarship. Academics sometimes refuse to identify as 'development studies' scholars, and when they choose to, might feel that they are looked down upon by their peers in cognate disciplines. Equally, though, those who view themselves as 'applied' or practice-based academics may sometimes find it difficult to compartmentalise themselves into 'Development Studies', as they identify more closely with social change or social justice.

Mixed views were also expressed about the opportunities and challenges presented by the fact that Development Studies is a broad church. As Development Studies is a multi-disciplinary field rather than a discipline, academics who do or might identify as 'Development Studies' scholars are often located in different parts of the university, creating myriad possibilities for collaborations, but also presenting challenges of organisation and the building of a critical mass of scholars. The different orientations to the study of development—critical/study of, impact-focused, policy-focused—are for the most part different communities of practice, creating silos rather than synergies, as evident in the different orientations of conferences organised by the DSAA, Research for Development Impact (RDI) and the Development Policy Centre at ANU (which organises the Australasian Aid conference). Consequently, the distinction between research in support of development, as opposed to 'development studies', often goes unchallenged. Further, this distinction can be reinforced when development studies scholarship fails to demonstrate its value, and indeed, indispensability to practical needs of development agencies. Questions remain therefore, as to whether the DSAA can and should continue to try to be everything for everyone, or present a narrower, more defined idea of the field, and who it represents.

The DSAA seemingly has an important role to play in educating the public, policy makers, academics, and (potential) students about what Development Studies is, and what it means to engage in research and scholarship in this field. Perhaps the harder task is completing what we started at the very beginning of establishing the DSAA: defining the field, and establishing an identity as to who we are. That there is no agreement yet on key issues such as the balance between 'inclusivity' versus a 'clear identity' speaks to the need for open debate and discussion, as well as the importance of aligning with networks and associations such as: IAG-CDG, Critical Development Network, RDI and so on.

The Status of Development Studies within Australian Universities

Participants pointed out that Universities are often keen to highlight their credentials in relation to ‘development’ or the SDGs, but several trends prevent academic programs flourishing within their institutions. Numbers have risen in some universities, remained stable in others, while for others they are perilously low. While some participants expressed concerns about whether the growth of Development Studies programs is desirable, and questions around ‘how big’ we should become, students in particular were worried about their future prospects in academia with shrinking departments. As university after university announces redundancies, academics too are feeling precarious. At the same time, the current pandemic and the massive impacts on economies, health, societies, means that Development Studies remains highly relevant and needed; the skills and knowledges of our graduates should be in high demand. Part of the challenge lies in communicating that relevance, and what our graduates can offer to global recovery efforts.

Development Studies programs are often very small, and often co-located with other programs. Academics feel precarious when restructures are on the horizon, particularly those involving program level cuts. Exacerbating this feeling of precarity are the challenges of credibility as outlined above. Development Studies academics co-located with other programs of study feel like lesser partners, the first to go if any cuts were to be made. Further, this co-location may provide a sense of the distinctiveness about a particular Development Studies program, but can also result in losing the distinctiveness of the field of study. For instance, when jobs in such departments are offered, it can sometimes be assumed that an International Relations (or Anthropology, Geography...) scholar, has the necessary expertise, even if they have never published in relevant Development Studies journals, or been exposed to core theoretical principles and sensibilities of the field.

Partially as a consequence of these problems, the curriculum of DS is inconsistent. There is a lack of a core curriculum that is taught in all programs, which makes it harder to clearly explain the particular attributes of DS graduates. Decisions over content of courses are often money driven, based on what will recruit students, rather than determined by what is important to study to provide the fundamentals of the field. The emphasis on practical courses that make graduates ‘job-ready’ can lead to a lack of focus on scholarship within the field. The co-location of DS with other disciplines or fields can result in very little DS content in a curriculum dominated by the ‘major discipline’, resulting in major gaps in graduate knowledges and skills. Universities should not, however, be encouraged to teach the same curriculum. Universities specialise, teach to their research strengths and offer niche programs that respond and create student demand. Nonetheless, a ‘bare bones’ common curriculum would provide some consistency across Australia, and provide a foundation for possible certification opportunities (see below).

A few participants expressed concern that Development Studies in Australia is impacted by the return to an anti-aid agenda and a shrinking aid budget. Increased resource constraints in the development sector indirectly affect jobs, and therefore domestic demand for enrolments in Development Studies courses. It was also felt by some that the aid agenda has too strong an influence in the design of DS programs. For example, the current focus on securitization has led to heavy support for academics and teaching in this area, leaving relatively less opportunities for others. Now, COVID is dominating attention, sucking up all resources and leaving little for ongoing priorities. Most notably, localisation, has not had the take up in the aid industry as needed. DS programs have also been relatively slow to change curriculum to understand the transformations occurring in the sector. For example, most aid is channelled through the private sector, but curriculum focuses on more conventional actors. In general, it seems that DS programs are responsive to the ‘development’ sector, rather than having a larger influence in shaping/reforming it, or developing the curriculum to interrogate it critically.

Opportunities

Despite these challenges, there are multiple opportunities for DS in the current climate. There was a sense that despite all the challenges associated with restructures, that the current moment provided an opportunity for review and renewal. Thinking outside the box in terms of bringing together innovative programs of study, across different faculties. And there is a lot of capacity within our universities, in and beyond the faculties in which DS sits, to engage with some of these opportunities suggested below:

- The focus on 'localisation' and valuing of local knowledge is a potential area of growth. But there is a balancing act, as we still need to be critical in how we reconceptualise the discourse and practice of leadership and localisation, and ensure it is meaningfully and ethically applied, rather than just another 'buzzword'.
- The focus on 'development' and the SDGs by universities creates opportunities, by way of resources and influence. DS also allows universities to reach into the region (Asia Pacific), and potentially provides a form of soft diplomacy for Australia.
- Several participants emphasised the importance of thinking regionally, engaging with other institutions in the region and strengthening collaboration with the brilliant scholars across the region. But also, we need to critically engage with the emergence of China's different models of development, and amplify south-south interventions.
- We could deepen our engagement with Indigenous knowledges and practices to inform new ways of 'doing development, and think through the practice of what it is to decolonise development studies.
- Perhaps more critically, this focus could open up space to educate university leadership and colleagues as to how some of the principles and values of DS—such as consultation, decolonization, equity—can be *meaningfully* achieved (and when we know it is whitewash!). We can be advocates for, and teach decolonisation and localisation, in our programs and in others. The way DS is embedded in a lot of degrees allows us to educate a much wider range of students, future graduates and citizens, who challenge the status quo, not merely repeat doctrine. And the experience of those participating in the consultations suggest that students love doing this; they see the relevance of our degrees, and/or the usefulness of a critical perspective that DS courses provide alongside other programs, such as accounting. Market research shows that DS programs are not only necessary, they are also economically sustainable.

III. DSAA Initiatives and Priorities

The challenges and opportunities for DS discussed above point to a need for the DSAA to develop a strategy to deal with: the lack of a clear identity for a field that is interdisciplinary, multi-sectoral, and that is facing historically unprecedented times. A valuable suggestion in this regard was a DSAA position paper that establishes what are for us the big questions, directions, and approaches to 'development' in general, and to development studies as a field of scholarship. Such a position paper would not only clarify our own identity as an association, but could also be an innovative contribution to the field internationally.

This broader position paper could then be linked with suggestions for specific initiatives that DSAA can pursue, and priority areas to be considered when developing the five-year strategy. They are presented against the existing aims of the DSAA in three areas of teaching, research and engagement, plus an overarching aim of building a community of scholars, students and practitioners.

Teaching

The current aims of the DSAA in relation to teaching are:

- Promote and support the academic study and teaching of Development Studies in Australia
- Build cross-institutional collaboration in Development Studies teaching and learning

There are several initiatives that could support our aims in relation to teaching as already developed (above), while the priorities of members suggests some expansion and/or tweaking of these aims may be needed.

There was wide support from academics and students for DSAA to take the lead in mapping out what constitutes a core curriculum in DS. This will provide consistency around the knowledge and skills that students graduate with and instil confidence that students will have comparable outcomes. At the same time, this curriculum should reflect only the foundations, from which universities could develop their own distinct programs. Differences between DS programs, with distinct specialisations, strengthens the field, and should be nurtured. It was recognised that the process of agreeing upon a core curriculum will be fraught, getting to the heart of questions of what DS is. Consultation, respectful discussions, and intellectual leadership is required. International students asked that they too be consulted as to what they want and need from their DS programs. There were also suggestions for DSAA to play a role in evaluating the curriculum of programs, and the quality of subjects.

Such a process of debate and discussion of curriculum also provides an opportunity to critically engage with how DS should be taught *in Australia*. Participants noted the importance of starting with a recognition that we are teaching on stolen land, and the need to teach students to critically think about our relation to Country and Indigenous Peoples. There is a potential to teach and promote Indigenous languages. As a settler state, we need to engage critically with development as a colonial enterprise. And critically, challenging the binaries of 'developed' and 'developing', and the idea that development is something that 'we' do 'over there'. Australia's socio-economic conditions, its history, geopolitical and academic positioning on the periphery, but as still being relatively able to take on greater responsibility for human prosperity and well-being beyond its borders, provides a particular location from which to teach, and contribute to advancing development studies globally.

A common curriculum and agreed upon graduate outcomes will also help DS graduates to gain accreditation and other opportunities. Several students have faced challenges in being certified by the Community Workers Association, as the CWA is unfamiliar with what DS is, and how it prepares students to undertake community work. Recognition as a professional body assists international students gain recognition for visa applications. If DS was listed on the Australian Government Register of Skills / qualifications, our graduates would be able to apply for two-year post-study visas. The DSAA could potentially play a role in liaising with the government and relevant associations, and advocating for such opportunities for graduates.

At a basic level, a key task of the DSAA is to build awareness of DS as a field of study. Ideas include reaching out to:

- Students in high schools
- The Vocational Education and Training sector
- Industry partners to co-sponsor courses / negotiate positions for graduates

It is noteworthy that the student discussion was most generative of ideas to build interest in DS, underlining that they perhaps have most at stake in growing the field.

DSAA can also play a role in developing and sharing resources for pedagogy, acknowledging the role that RDI has played in this regard. For example, resources on how we teach the global dynamics of development, how we decolonize and expand our curriculum, localisation. In practical terms, resources such as reading lists, case

studies, even mini-lectures that can be shared would be of great benefit. DSAA currently has started to do this, and while in the early stages, has blogs and other useful resources on the website.

There is also a need to go beyond our members, to support the teaching of colleagues in different programs, and beyond Australia. There are examples of teaching collaborations with universities in the Global South, particularly the Pacific. Mutually beneficial partnerships can support the teaching of each institution, but we must also recognise when we need to hand over ownership of these programs. There is a role for the DSAA to educate university leadership as to how such meaningful partnerships can be built and sustained, recognising that many initiatives can be paternalistic in nature, or extractive. Finally, a simple and perhaps urgent task, is for the DSAA to provide guidelines to universities as to how work integrated learning, study abroad and student volunteer programs can be developed and conducted so that they are ethical, non-exploitative, and have positive learning outcomes.

Research

The aims of the DSAA in relation to research are:

- Generate and cultivate knowledges in the field of Development Studies through research and research training
- Achieve recognition of Development Studies as a distinct field of study and research in Australia
- Facilitate scholarly co-operation and collaboration contributing to the democratisation of knowledge about development through purposeful engagement with marginalised scholars, and perspectives
- Promote associational life among scholars and researchers in Australia across all disciplines conducting research for or about development

There were several suggestions for initiatives that DSAA can undertake to support these aims.

- There was a lot of support for the development of study groups that focus on particular themes or topics. Study groups were seen as a way of meeting like-minded academics, and for students, to fill knowledge gaps. Several participants mentioned the study groups of DSA UK as a good model.
- Presentations and seminars via Zoom. The circumstances of 2020 which has made Zoom necessary, has been a boon for regional universities in particular, and the DSAA can organise these.
- Podcasts are a form of community engagement (below), and a useful medium to communicate research and build awareness of DS
- DSAA could create a database of researchers by areas of expertise, which could serve to bring together researchers working on similar topics to form teams for grant applications, publications, or other submissions. [potentially linked to the study groups idea above]
- The biannual conference was seen as an important opportunity to come together, although how it can better be aligned with / in conversation with other conferences (RDI conference and the Australasian Aid conference) needs further discussion.
- DSAA can also run panels at other conferences, extending our reach into other cognate disciplines and also internationally.
- Build awareness of the new FOR codes, that are having slow take up in many universities.

There was discussion about a potential journal in a couple of the consultations. Some were supportive of a journal to further promote the field in Australia, and to shape how development studies is seen as a field of study (that is, define it away from the caricatures mentioned above). There were concerns however, that there are a lot of competing journals, so establishing what makes the journal distinct will be important. A journal is also a lot of work, and requires commitment. Several alternatives were raised. These included working papers, research to practice papers, research insight summaries, open source publications, and a Development Policy

Review style format. The DSAA will need to give considerable thought to the question of a DSAA owned/branded publication, given recent experience with the DSAA's bid to edit the *Development in Practice* journal, and the failed attempt to encourage students to publish working papers under the mentorship of senior academics (though this could have been about timing).

Engagement

The aims of the DSAA in relation to social impact and engagement with industry are:

- Promote dialogue and create space for debate around research and thinking for and about development, as well as provide avenues for the wide dissemination of research findings through the organisation of, for example, conferences, workshops, journals, working papers and other initiatives
- Be a hub for expertise to governments, development agencies, the private sector, media and civil society organisations regarding issues in development around the world
- Promote a voice and enhance the presence of Australian Development Studies in relevant national and international forums
- Facilitate dialogue between academia, policy and practice

In general, there was an expressed need for the DSAA to engage more proactively with industry actors, to influence these actors and the direction of development practice in Australia, rather than merely being responsive. Priorities include:

- Educating donors about the importance of local knowledge, and developing a position statement on localisation
- Greater engagement with DFAT about how funds are dispersed, their priority areas and the consequences of their foci, and how they need to support decolonising efforts.

Academics and students also noted the importance of connections with various industry actors for opportunities in research and employment. There was also a sense that we need to be in conversation more with practitioners of development, to promote both our research and critical thinking on development

Building a community of solidarity, belonging and care

Perhaps unsurprisingly in these times of uncertainty and precarity, many of the conversations centred around how the DSAA can build a community of solidarity and care. There is a sense that we need to work against the individualising tendencies of the university, and create spaces of collaboration. Concretely, the aforementioned study groups, conference panels, and seminars, can create such spaces. As can other forms of care work, such as creating 'check in spaces' in which senior colleagues reach out to junior colleagues, and to each other, and online meetings where people are able to express their concerns, trouble shoot collectively, or simply be there for each other. Such efforts are keenly appreciated. International students spoke of how important the messages of support from supervisors and lecturers during lockdowns were, helping them get through stressful periods, providing a sense of belonging and even pride. The DSAA, and members, should 'walk the talk', that is, put into practice what they teach, as many academics evidently already do.

One of the most wonderful outcomes of the DSAA consultations was the organisation of one such check-in group. Following the student consultation, one student participant messaged all the participants and invited them to share in a talking group session (followed by food and drink). She seeks to support wellbeing during study and with development employment opportunities post study. It would be great if the DSAA could support such initiatives, and to be proactive in making them happen.

Support is particularly needed for ECRs and Research Students as the disruption caused by COVID-19 comes at a critical juncture in their careers. In addition to creating a space where they can articulate what they need and how they can be supported, other initiatives suggested were:

- Assisting them to publish through co-authorship or mentorship
- Being their allies, recognising that it is difficult for ECRs in particular to challenge authorities from a junior position
- Providing opportunities for students and ECRs to demonstrate skills that will help them in the workplace, such as leadership, project management etc..
- Webinars on how to produce scholarship that does not rely on fieldwork, particularly important for PhD students
- Include ECRs on research grants
- Link Honours projects to larger research projects, for resources and to encourage them to go into PhDs
- Provide information and networking opportunities for jobs beyond academia

Solidarity is also sought with our colleagues beyond Australia. There is strong support to build alliances with other international associations across the region. This requires some groundwork, including mapping who is out there in terms of associations and researchers, especially those not working in English. There was also an acknowledgement that we need to tread carefully, recognising that we are operating in conditions of (post) coloniality, and be cognizant of our own positioning within structures of power. A database or register of researchers working in Australia and the region could help to decentre power, take scholarship away from the usual suspects, while also helping to connect people to foster collaborations.

The DSAA can also play a role in creating connections with universities located in the global South. As an association, DSAA can establish an evidence base and promote the value of long term programs of ‘twinning’ universities, and by establishing guidelines as to the core principles and practices of such partnerships. Crucially, this advocacy should aim to dispel the notion/prejudice among some in university leadership that the only partnerships worth pursuing are with top-100 universities. As members we can collaborate with colleagues overseas on publications and grants. We can also capitalise on initiatives such as the University of the World news.

As mentioned in Section II, a number of universities in Australia have adopted the SDGs framework in an ambiguous manner. While the focus group participants admit that SDGs themselves are contested and problematic, there is scope for the DSAA to engage with universities on how to integrate SDG goals and indicators.

DSAA could also use social media better to connect members and to build a community of scholars, and to get students to feel like a cohort. Social media could be used to create online spaces for networking and the spaces of care as outlined above. Blogs could also provide an avenue for a different style of writing and research communication. It was also acknowledged, however, that keeping on top of social media is a lot of work, and very time-consuming. Expanding DSAA’s social media presence may depend on how we can engage members and get them to use these platforms. [NB: The DSAA does have a casual social media person, but with only a limited number of hours per week].

Other great ideas included:

- Linking with ABC International Development or other similar organisations
- Having member profiles in the DSAA newsletter
- Harnessing technology to engage with students
- Workshops for networking, and also for rethinking research
- Increasing the network of universities who are affiliate members
- Reach out to all new DS students so that they are aware of the association

IV. Future consultation

The DSAA is an association for its members, and hence there is a need for ongoing consultation, particularly when it comes to developing a five year strategy. Further, while we hope all academics, researchers and students who identify with 'Development Studies' join the association, realistically we need to find ways to engage with the multiple development studies programs across the country, not all of which will have representation. At the same time, everyone is busy, and endless consultation can eat up precious time. The final set of questions thus related to how much consultation is enough, but not too much.

There were mixed responses. The members of one consultation were enthusiastic about what they had achieved in two hours of talking, and felt that a forum for people to talk about their problems and ideas would be valuable. Discussions that are centred around themes such as 'care', decolonising, fieldwork, etc. would be valuable. Across consultations, people expressed that DSAA will be stronger if it was democratic, participatory, deliberative, and that the opportunity to share different perspectives is valuable. Students expressed a desire for their own space for, and driven by them.

On the other hand, there was also strong support for the representatives elected into the DSAA to lead on behalf of members. People are stretched for time, and having elected representatives means that they can and should take the initiative and direct the future of the association. While there was some support for representatives from each university to meet on a semi-regular basis, there were questions around workload. Whatever form such consultation takes, it needs a clear agenda.

As Development Studies scholars, we also know the perils of 'participatory' consultation, and the need to be attuned to power and how this shapes the agenda, and whose voices can be expressed, and whose count. Although this was not raised in the consultations, it has been extensively discussed within the DSAA committee.

As sign off

The consultations were an exceptionally valuable exercise for the DSAA committee to take stock of where we are, what we have done, and where we are going. Again, our gratitude to all of the participants. It was heartening to hear the value that many participants expressed about the association, and the ideas for initiatives and strategic directions is inspiring. The report will now be delivered to the next DSAA committee to be elected on 13 November 2020. We wish them/us all the best if bringing into fruition the wonderful ideas contained therein.