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Encounters between scholars and policymakers do not always have happy outcomes. This book is the product of an encounter that—for a series of reasons related to personalities, professional positions, and historical timing (notably, the end of a long period of ascent of neoliberal ideas)—was unusually fruitful. The book began to take shape during two meetings in 1999 that assembled scholars from Brazil, Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and policymakers from the UK Department for International Development and World Bank. The intellectual backdrop to our discussions in the splendid surroundings of Eynsham Hall and Castle Donnington in the UK was a shared concern about the depoliticization of debates on international development policy and an awareness of a growing interest in empowerment of the poor, pro-poor policy-making, and good governance. Our immediate concern was the politics of poverty reduction and the longer term distributional and political consequences of different bundles of pro-poor public policies.

The policy actors with whom we had contact prior to the meetings complained that much public policy in low- and middle-income countries failed to bear the expected fruit because of political dynamics. Yet these dynamics were invisible in policy analysis and pronouncements and in many recent academic analyses. A number of scholar-colleagues made similar observations and commented that scholars in the international development debate have played an important role in legitimizing and reproducing the technification of development discourse. We hope that the chapters assembled here are an antidote.

All the authors assembled here have earned special appreciation for their patience with the persnickety editors. Particular thanks are due to the one author who finally did complain about the successive rounds of revisions, but nonetheless met all the deadlines and proved a model and stimulating collaborator. Carol Spencer cheerfully bore the burden of seeing the manuscript to the publisher and then to the press. We are very grateful to Ron Herring for providing the valuable and much needed support that ensured the manuscript found its way into the hands of such a competent publisher. For providing valuable discussion that helped
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