

# A SYNOPTIC OF THE DEVELOPMENT IDEA



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**ABSTRACT:** Although it can be traced back if not in the mists of time then at least to the moral and philosophic quest for a better form of society in the eighteenth century, the idea of development was «invented», as it were, in the wake of the second world war in the hope and expectation of a «new world», a better life for the majority of the world's people, many of whom were mired in poverty. Development has been hampered by the social and economical structure of society at the time of the meeting of their needs, not to mention the realization of their human potential. This work is an account of the history of the perceptions of development over time and the experts on this subject, as well as theories of development and results of studies on this topic.

**KEYWORDS:** Development, Neoliberalism, Liberalism, Development Theories, Poverty.

**RESUMEN:** Aun cuando la idea de desarrollo puede rastrearse si no en las brumas del tiempo, al menos en la búsqueda moral y filosófica de una mejor forma de sociedad en el siglo XVIII, esta idea fue «inventada», a principios de la segunda guerra mundial, con la esperanza y la expectativa de un «nuevo mundo», una mejor vida para la mayor parte de la población del mundo, buena parte de la cual estaba sumida en la pobreza. El desarrollo se ha visto obstaculizado por la estructura social y económica de la sociedad del momento de tratar de cubrir sus necesidades, ya no se diga la realización de su potencial humano. Este trabajo es una narración de la historia de las percepciones del desarrollo en el tiempo y de los expertos sobre el tema, así como de las teorías del desarrollo y los hallazgos de los estudios sobre este tema.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Desarrollo, neoliberalismo, liberalismo, teorías del desarrollo, pobreza.

Although it can be traced back if not in the mists of time then at least to the moral and philosophic quest for a better form of society in the eighteenth century, the idea of development was «invented», as it were, in the wake of the second world war in the hope and expectation of a «new world», a better life for the majority of the world's people, many of whom were mired in poverty and prevented by the economic and social structure of the society at the time from meeting their needs, not to mention realizing their human potential. Of course, to explain the rather sudden or revived interest in «development» in the post war context it is also possible to point to much less noble, even rather ignoble, considerations, such as those that motivated the policymakers and officials of the US state, concerned with shaping the emerging world order to the geopolitical interests that they represented.

Regardless of the issues that surrounded the inception of the development project in the late 1940s, there are a number of important or good reasons, both intellectual and political, for assessing the current state and reviewing the recent history of thinking and practice associated with the development idea. One reason is the need to place the emergence of diverse schools of development thought, each with its toolbox of ideas used to describe and explain, from a historical and theoretical perspective, what is going on at the level of development and to prescribe action. At issue here is not only the importance of grasping the essence of what is going on today and what has been going on over the past six decades of development, but to draw some conclusions for better understanding and possible further action. The paper is written to this purpose.

#### STRUCTURE AND AGENCY IN THE STUDY OF DEVELOPMENT

There are essentially two basic ways of thinking about development, understood as desired and defined improvements in the human condition together with the changes needed to bring them about. As to precisely what improvements and the agency and driving forces of change are matters of theoretical perspective –formulations of different ideas advanced in the context of changing conditions over time. But the diverse efforts to theorise and analyse the dynamics of development over time under these changing conditions, can be placed into two categories or viewed from two standpoints. One is from the standpoint of the actors and agencies involved, which is to say, with regard to the strategies pursued to bring about development. We might term this the strategic view of development, which assumes that development is the outcome of actions taken or policies implemented as means of achieving a predefined or defined goal –a matter of agency, ends and means. The alternative way of looking at development and conceiving it is as the result not of agency or the pursuit of a strategy, conscious action in the direction of progressive change, but rather as the outcome of the workings of



a system, understood as a set of congealed practices that make up the institutional and social structure of the system.<sup>1</sup> From this perspective, the system in its normal functioning creates conditions that are «objective» in their effects on people –and countries– according to their location in this structure. This «structure», which has both an institutional and a social dimension, once formed, in effect limit or shape, or even determine, the possible actions, limiting or restricting the freedom of action and choice. Of course, the structures not only confine or shape, providing limits to action or what is possible to achieve. While limiting the actions and opportunities of some they provide opportunities and facilitate actions for others, providing conditions that are enabling for some, facilitating their «development» but impede the efforts of others, providing obstacles. Also, these «structures» are not only uneven in their effects but they are open to some and closed to others, leading to efforts to reform them –to provide a greater equality of opportunity, freedom to act, and expansion of the choices available to the individuals seeking entry or social inclusion. Moreover, these structures once formed are by no means immutable. They can be changed and over time do change, in ways and under conditions of collective action that require study. One conclusion drawn from such study (the history of social change) is that under conditions of «crisis, when the workings of an institutional structure are pushed to their limits, exhausting the capacity of an institution to function as designed, these «structure» is weakened, releasing forces of change and providing opportunities to bring about change –in one direction or another.

In fact, the actions of individuals –or corporations, governments and other agencies of change or developments– are never fully free, released from constraint: people or countries are not «free to choose», to quote Milton Friedman and make reference to a view shared by neoliberals, members of the Mont Pelerin thought collective (Mirowski and Plehwe, 2009). Rather, the freedom of the individuals to act and choose is of necessity<sup>2</sup> constrained and conditioned by the structure of the system –according to the location of the individual (or country).

<sup>1</sup> A systems perspective on the social organisation and evolution of societies was introduced into the study of «society» in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The basic feature of this mode of scientific analysis (sociology) is the assumption that society in its diverse dimensions) is composed not of individuals, each of whom makes a rational calculus of self-interest or whose behaviour is otherwise subjectively meaningful, but rather of an interconnected set of institutionalised practices (institutions) that constitute a whole and work together as parts of a system. From this sociological perspective, the structure of society can be analysed in three dimensions or at three levels: i) social (the social structure--a constellation of social groups formed on the basis of conditions that individuals share with others in the diverse groups that they belong to); ii) organisation (an organizational structure formed in concerted efforts of groups of individuals to engage in collective action to pursue shared goals); and iii) institutional (the institutionalised practices that constitute the social system as a set of interconnected institutions.

<sup>2</sup> On this point of «necessity» we can draw the line between conservatism and social liberalism on the one hand, and neoliberalism (and some forms of radicalism on the other. Neoliberalism is premised on the assumption that individuals in their choices and actions should be free from any social constraint («free to choose» in Milton Friedman's formulation. Virtually all other philosophic standpoints or analytics assume the contrary –that action is necessarily or normally al-



On the other hand, as already noted these structures might be confining or limiting for some, constraining the freedom to act or choose, but they are rarely «determining», i.e. they do not give a determinate form to possible action, preventing to some or great degree of freedom to act in a social condition that might well be defined as «oppression» –and, in the process generating pressures for change and a demand for release from this condition, a struggle for emancipation or liberation.<sup>3</sup> This is to say, any «development» (understood in either conditional or structural terms) entails both structural and strategic factors: any action, or policy, no matter how conceived and designed, has both a strategic and a structural dimension. As Karl Marx once stated in elaborating on a historical materialist understanding of social change, individuals can and do act but not under conditions of their choosing. The same applies to actions of diverse agencies in the field of development: actions or policies are always limited by the structures of the system, the working of which create conditions that are enabling of some actions but limiting of others. Thus, it behooves any analyst of the development process to specify both the structural and strategic factors of development, to determine the relative role and weight of these factors at play.

### *Development as strategy. Action on ideas and values*

In strategic or social action terms, development is basically a matter of action on ideas, and the most relevant ideas in the history of development are those of progress, equality, freedom and fraternity (solidarity) –the rallying cry for revolutionary change in France (and elsewhere subsequently). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century– in the movement that makes up the Scottish and French «enlightenment» (viz. the belief in the power of human reason to understand and change the world) and the French Revolution –these ideas served as ideal reference points for a philosophic criticism, rather than a scientific theory, of the existing society (the «ancien regime») in its social and institutional structure (the monarchy, class rule and the church...) for creating conditions that deprived people from what is essential to them–their freedom as equals, each with capabilities and a human potential that could be «developed» under the right circumstances or changed conditions), dehumanizing them in relation to the human essence defined as «freedom» and conditions that are equal for all.

These ideas of economic *progress*; *freedom* from class exploitation, oppression, ignorance and poverty; social or class *equality*; and social solidarity, did not as

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ways conditioned to varying degrees by the structure of the system, be this structure conceived of in social group or class, organisational or institutional terms.

<sup>3</sup> Such a struggle for emancipation can be viewed as a socialist or Marxist conception of «freedom» as opposed to the «social liberal» idea embodied in the UNDP's Human Development approach or the «neoliberal» conception embodied the call in the 1980s for a «new world order».



some historians prefer to believe, come about in the rise and fall of conflicting ideas. Rather, as Marx argued, the «history» and struggle over ideas has a material basis. For example, the idea of freedom when constructed and advanced in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in a context of transformative change, reflected and theoretically represented diverse struggles in the real world –the struggle of serfs for freedom from oppression and the exploitation of the landlords; also the struggle of middle class intellectuals against the tyranny of the church in regard to their freedom to think about the world in different unsanctioned ways, to escape censorship and active repression of ideas that conflicted with the official view; and the struggle of citizens to free themselves from the tyranny of monarchy—from the arbitrary whim and will of the monarch who had assumed the power of political decision-making, to lord it over them, as a condition of class rule –and to battle for democracy and revolutionary change; as well as the struggle of an incipient bourgeoisie, representing an emerging capitalist mode of production, to liberate themselves from the restrictions imposed by the *ancien regime* on the freedom of their business enterprise in the form of rents, tolls and taxes, impeded their private economic enterprise. The point of these examples is that the same applies both later and today. In any review of the itinerary of ideas that make up the development enterprise the conditions that gave rise to them need to be identified for the sake of understanding their development dynamics.

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> these ideas, in the context of diverse pressures and forces for change, were used not as scientific theory, i.e. as explanatory propositions, but as ideology, the belief in the need for change in a progressive direction (freedom or equality) –used not to explain but to mobilise action towards a desired goal, a better form of society that would allow individuals more fully to realise their human potential. But in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, given a very different context in the post war period these very same ideas were reformulated and given a new form as «development», a project that, according to Wolfgang Sachs and his associates in post development theory, was invented so as to discourage leaders of those countries engaged in a struggle of national liberation from colonial rule from succumbing to the lure of communism –to make sure that they would take a capitalist and not a socialist path towards nation-building and economic development (Sachs, 1990).

At first, i.e. in the 1950s and 1960s, development was understood as «progress», defined and measured in terms of «economic growth», the expansion of national output and an associated increase in per capita incomes. This idea of development as economic growth and an associated structural change (industrialization, capitalism, modernization) was reformulated in the 1980s in the context of a «new world order» in which the forces of economic freedom were released from the regulatory constraints of the welfare-development state.

As for the idea of equality it was also reformulated and acted upon in different ways in the 1960s and 1970s. In Cuba it assumed the form of an ideological



commitment to egalitarianism –to bring about a more egalitarian allocation of society’s productive resources and in the distribution of income (Brundenius, 1984). This concern for egalitarian relations and social conditions equal for all was reflected in the construction of the «revolutionary consciousness» that marks the Cuban Revolution in its project to free the population from imperialist exploitation, class rule and the oppressive state of poverty. In the Indian state of Kerala it took a similar form, although the idea of equality was also rooted in an indigenous and endogenous culture of egalitarianism and communalism. In this form, in the context of a double struggle for both national independence and liberation from class rule, the idea of equality was acted upon through the public action of a communist party regime, of a state concerned above all to bring about a more egalitarian access to society’s productive resources and a more socially just distribution of government resources for education, health and other social conditions of what in the 1980s would be regarded as a model of «human development» (Streeten, 1984).

More generally, in the 1970s, under conditions of a push towards social liberal (government-led) reform (to counter the emerging pressures for revolutionary change), it took or was given form as «growth with equity», i.e. in the idea that development entailed not just growth but a more equitable distribution –redistributed growth– so as to meet the basic needs of the population, and reduce or alleviate poverty in the process.<sup>4</sup> The defined agency for this poverty-oriented approach to «development» was the state (the government to be precise) which by means of progressive taxation brought about a secondary distribution of income, channelling a part of market generated incomes into social and development programs. In the late 1980s (ECLAC, 1990) the idea of equality was once again reshaped, this time as «structural transformation with equity» (in the formulation by ECLAC), «structural adjustment with a human face» (Cornia, Jolly and Stewart, 1987) or «sustainable human development» as conceived of by the UNDP (1996, 1997a, 1997c).

As for the idea of freedom –«development as freedom» in the consequential formulation by Amartya Sen– it took three fundamental forms. One was essentially socialist –freedom as emancipation from oppressive institutions and practices (national liberation from colonial rule, freedom from exploitative class rule, etc.). It was also given a social liberal and a neoliberal twist. In socialist form the idea was institutionalized as the right of all citizens to health, education, employment and housing, as well as the freedom from poverty and a life of want; the right to share equitably if not equally in the social product. This conception of freedom as emancipation from oppressive institutions and practices (imperialism, class rule) was a critical element of the ethical and conceptual foundation of the Cuban Revolution and incorporated into the policy framework adopted

<sup>4</sup> On the domain assumptions, central concepts and explanatory proposition of this «basic needs paradigm» see Hunt (1989).



by the revolutionaries once in power. As for the neoliberal conception of freedom as the liberation of individuals from the constraints of society on their freedom to pursue their self-interest, it was embodied and took form in the imputed Washington Consensus on the structural reforms required for globalization –the price of admission into a rather select club of countries committed to bringing about a world under the sway of the forces of «economic freedom and democracy» (to quote from George W. Bush’s National Security Doctrine, September 2002).

The most consequential formulation of the idea of development as freedom, however, was based on the philosophy of social liberalism, as articulated most clearly by Amartya Sen in his *Development as Freedom* (1989?) and embodied in the UNDP’s notion of human development, which can be viewed as the fusion of the ideas of progress, equality and freedom into a theory that development above all is a matter of freedom, «expanding the choices available to each individual and encouraging individuals to take advantage of their «opportunities» –the role of the state being to level the playing field, open up and reform each institution to ensure greater social inclusion, and capacitate individuals to take advantage of the opportunities by institutions such as education.

#### DEVELOPMENT AS PROCESS, THE EVOLUTION OF A SYSTEM

In structural terms, the development process of long-term change in the evolution of large-scale societies has been conceptualised and periodised with reference to three meta-theories, each with its own historical narrative. One of these meta-theories/narratives focuses on, and is concerned with the transformation of an agrarian society and economy into an industrial system, the process of which can be dubbed «industrialization. In the process of this transformation it is possible to place countries in three categories, depending on their degree of evolution: preindustrial (agrarian), industrializing and industrial(ized). It is assumed that the level of socioeconomic improvement in the human conditions achieved by a country is commensurate with, if not a consequence of this change in the structure of economic production.

A second meta-theory of long-term change views the process instead in terms of a fundamental change in the structure of the values that underpin the institutional structure of the system. In these terms, the evolution of the system, or rather, the transformation of one into another, can be conceptualised as a transition from a traditional type society (oriented towards traditional values such as communalism in which individuals are subordinated to the community of which they are a part at the level of mutual obligation) to a modern system characterised by an orientation towards possessive individualism, and in which individuals «achieve» their position rather than have it ascribed to them by «society». In the process societies can be characterised as traditional, modernizing or modern.



The third meta-theory of long-term change, which provides another window yet on, or lens with which to view, the process of long-term progressive change is that of capitalist development (the transformation of a pre-capitalist society and economy into a capitalist system). The fundamental change in this conception is the consequence of a process of social transformation –of a society of small-scale agricultural producers («peasants» in the lexicon of agrarian transformation) into a proletariat, a class defined by its status of being dispossessed from any means of production and thereby compelled to exchange their labour-power for a living wage.

These three meta-theories of long-term social change and development –industrialization, modernization and capitalist development or proletarianization– might well be viewed as three different dimensions of the same process –the «great transformation» of a pre-capitalist, traditional and agrarian society into a modern industrial capitalists system, a process which has taken several centuries to unfold and is still seen to be unfolding in different parts of the global south. In the global north, the theory is, the process has been virtually completed– was completed sometime in the 19870s or 1980s, according to some sociologists, leading to the formation of a post-modern, post-industrial and post-capitalist society, and others to a «theoretical impasse» in which none of these meta-theories and their corresponding narratives, and one of the ideologues involved in the mobilisation of action in a progressive direction, have any relevance in describing and explaining «what is going on» in the real world. There are however those who see the process not as «complete» or as having to an end but rather as assuming a different form under changed conditions. The economists behind the 2008 *World Development Report* (hereafter WDR-08) fall into this category, as do the agrarian sociologists and economists who have argued, and continue to argue, the inevitable passing of the «peasantry» as an agent of social production and category of economic analysis.

### *Farewell to the Peasantry?*

The forces of change –industrialisation, capitalist development and modernisation– operating on the inhabitants of rural society in the 1960s and 1970s were by a number of accounts bringing about the transformation of a society of small-scale agricultural producers or peasant farmers into a working class. This process was conceptualised in various ways. Marxist scholars theoretically constructed the process as «primitive accumulation» (the separation of the direct producer from the land and other means of production) or «proletarianization» (the conversion of the resulting surplus population into a working class). Non-Marxist scholars, however, operating with a theory of capitalist modernisation analysed the same dynamics with a different language but in a not altogether different





way, in reference to a process that would entail the disappearance of the peasantry as an economic agent and as a category of economic analysis.

In the 1970s this view of structural change, shared by both Marxist and non-Marxist scholars in the structural form of their analysis, gave way to a heated debate, between the «proletarianists», adherents of Marx's thesis of the «multiplication» (incessant growth) of the proletariat», and the «peasantists» who argued that the forces of change were not immutable and that resistance by the peasants could defuse or derail these forces, allowing the peasants to survive and sustain their rural livelihoods.<sup>5</sup> After a hiatus of some years, essentially a decade and a half of neoliberal reform, this debate has been renewed in the study of a «new rurality» as well as the dynamic forces of resistance against the neoliberal agenda mounted by the landless workers, the indigenous communities and peasant or small producer organisations in the 1990s. Although, by several accounts this wave of active resistance has subsided or somewhat abated the debate continues, with some arguing the inevitability trend towards the disappearance of the peasantry, others arguing very much the contrary.

### *Agriculture for development: Pathways out of rural poverty*

A recent formulation of the conception of development as modernisation and capitalist development is provided by the economists at the World Bank in its latest 2008 WDR focused on «agriculture for development» and diverse «pathways out of (rural) poverty». As the economists at the Bank conceive of development it entails a protracted but incessant process structural change that inevitably bring about or creates possible conditions for economic and development. At issue is a process of productive and social transformation (modernisation and capitalist development but urbanization rather than industrialisation) which paves the way out of poverty for the rural poor. As the WDR-08 has it there are three fundamental pathways out of rural poverty, each involving an adjustment to the forces of change operating on the poor: farming, labour and migration.

As for farming it turns out that it provides an avenue of mobility or pathway out of poverty for very few in that it requires peasants to become other than they are –a major transformation of the direct small-scale agricultural producer into an entrepreneur or capitalist, preferably both, in order to access credit, markets and technology, and to mobilise the available productive resources. The driving force behind this social transformation is capitalist development of agriculture, which entails both a concentration of landholding and a technological conversion of production based on a significant increase in the rate of productive investment (in modernizing or upgrading production technology). The pressures

<sup>5</sup> On the recent debates and associated studies of the impact of neoliberalism on the peasant economy and society see in particular Otero (1999).



on farming to increase the productivity of agricultural labour via technological upgrading or modernisation (increasing the capital intensity of production) are immense.

Agricultural activity or farming under these conditions is clearly not an option for the vast majority of peasants who are therefore encouraged, if not compelled, to abandon the farm and for many also the countryside to migrate in the search for better opportunities for self advancement or productive economic activity. In this context there are essentially two pathways out of poverty, according to the economists behind the Report. One is labour –to work off farm for wages– a strategy that by many accounts large numbers of the rural poor are already pursuing, if the statistics on rural household incomes are any indication (over 50% acquire over half of their income from non-farming activities, i.e. off-farm wage labour).

The other pathway out of poverty is migration, one that by numerous other accounts many of the rural poor have opted for by migrating either to the urban centre or cities in the country or further abroad. The theory behind this development is that the countryside constitutes a massive reservoir of surplus labour, pushing the rural poor off the farms,... and that the greater opportunity for wage-remunerated labour in the cities would attract and pull the displaced rural proletariat into the cities, absorbing them into the labour force of a expanding capitalist nucleus of urban-based industry.

The theory behind this development took various forms but was constructed as a model by Arthur Lewis. However, research into the dynamics of this rural-to-urban migration suggests, and later studies have confirmed, that the outcome of the forces of change did not confirm to this theory. For one thing, in the 1980s the nucleus of capitalist industry refused to expand, generating an enormous supply of migrant labour surplus to the absorptive capacity of the urban labour market, leading to the growth instead of a burgeoning informal sector of unregulated or unstructured economic activity –essentially work not for wages in industrial plants, factories and offices but working on their own account in the streets. It was estimated in the 1980s and into the 1990s anywhere from 80 to 90% of the new employment opportunities created in the growing urban economies in the region were generated in the «informal sector, which in many countries, by the 1990s, constituted around 40% of the urban economically active population. As Mike Davis (2006) documented and analysed on the basis of, or with reference to, a Marxist theory of surplus labour, this new urban proletariat is associated with the growth of a planet of slums as well as peri-urban areas with a floating surplus population with one foot in the urban economy and the other in the rural communities.

Another manifestation of the assumption that labour and migration constitute the most effective pathways out of rural poverty is the belief, deeply embedded in the modernization theory that dominated analysis and practice in the



1950s and the 1970s and evidently shared by World Bank economists even today, is that i) the dominant form of agricultural production, the small-scale agricultural producer or peasant farmer, is economically backward, marginal and unproductive; ii) the peasant economy of small-scale localized production is a drag on development; iii) capital invested in urban-based industry has a considerably greater return, with much greater multiplier-effects on production and employment, than a comparable investment in agriculture; iv) development requires, and is predicated on, a modernization process of structural transformation –of agriculture into industry and the peasantry into a working class; v) rural society and agriculture in this process serve development as a reservoir of labour surplus to the requirements of capitalist development and modernization; vi) farming opportunities for the rural poor, most of whom are engaged in relatively unproductive economic activities and are either landless or near landless, are scarce and restricted because either the limits of land reform have been reached or because of the requirements of capitalist modernization (large or increased-scale production, capital-intensive technology, external inputs, access to markets, etc.); vii) many of the rural poor who retain some access to land are compelled to turn towards wage labour as a source of livelihood and household income; and viii) because of the economic and social structure of agricultural production there are simply too many people in rural society chasing too few opportunities for productive economic activity. Thus farming provides few «opportunities» for the rural poor to change and improve their situation– to escape or alleviate their poverty.

The combination of these ideas have led many economists –including, as it turns out, the lead authors of the WDR-08– to view the peasantry by and large as an anachronism, seeking to defend a way of life and an economy that is inherently nonviable, entrenching most in a poverty trap. The best, if not precisely the only, pathway out of this dilemma is to abandon farming and migrate in the search of wage-labour employment opportunities and inclusion in government services, also more accessible in the cities and urban centres.

### *The (international) dynamics of (international) migration*

According to Marx's theory of the general law of capital accumulation the process of capitalist development and proletarianization hinges on the formation of a floating and stagnant army of surplus labour that is absorbed when and where and as needed for the expansion of capital. By the 1980s this process had fuelled process of massive migration from the countryside to the cities and urban centres on the periphery of the system. However, within the institutional and policy framework of the new world order the forces of change that had been operating on regional and local scale, restricted by the social structure of capital accumula-



tion, began to expand and operate globally. It would take several decades of capitalist development under a neoliberal regime before the global dynamics of these forces asserted themselves as an identifiable trend but by the turn into a new millennium, towards the end of what Harvey (2005) termed a «short history of neoliberalism, the outcome was clear: the formation of a global labour force fuelled by diverse regional reservoirs of surplus labour. Although the mobility of this labour, relative to movement of capital, is restricted and regulated by the migration policies of the states at the centre of the global capitalist system, there is little question about its role as a lever of global capital accumulation.

The diverse economic and social dynamics of this accumulation and capitalist development process have been conceptualised and analysed by Raul Delgado Wise and his associates in the analysis of the migration-development nexus in the particular case and regional context of «forced» Mexican labour migration to the US (Delgado Wise,). From the perspective of the economists at the World Bank, a perspective that is widely shared in the community of development scholars, this migration has significant development implications. For one, it provides a means of absorbing the mass of surplus labour generated by the capitalist development of agriculture. It is evident (see the discussion above) that the urban centres in the country and elsewhere in the region do not have the capacity to absorb this surplus labour. Also, migration provides a pathway out of rural poverty and an avenue of social mobility and human development (the expansion of choice and increased opportunities for self-realization) for workers. Further, via the mechanism of remittances the construction of a cross-border labour force and a network of transnational migrant communities, migrant labour directly and indirectly contributes to local community-based development in the Mexican countryside. But Delgado Wise and his associates in migration-and-development theory provide a very different perspective on this migration process. As Delgado Wise (2009) constructs it, labour migration to the US and Europe in the context of neoliberal globalization allows «capital» in the north of a global development divide to appropriate the human resources and labour power of countries and regions in the global south without having to bear the costs of accumulating these resources and reproducing this vast reservoir of labourpower.

## II. SCHOOLS OF DEVELOPMENT: A BRIEF DECADE-BY-DECADE REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT THEORY AND PRACTICE (AND PARADIGMATIC SHIFTS)

Development thinking and practice over the years since the inception of the development project since the end of the World War II have taken different forms, in response to changing circumstances and the emergence of new problems, that can be traced out almost decade by decade.



### *The paradigm of the expanding capitalist nucleus: development in the 1950-60s*

From the outset, i.e. as of Harry Truman's Point-4 program of technical and financial «assistance» in 1948, development was understood in economic terms: the idea of progress reformulated as economic growth –the expansion of national output, and the increase in national income derived from that output, as a means of improving the standard of living for the population as a whole. This conception of development reflected a fundamental concern for reactivating a process of capital accumulation in countries both in the north, i.e. in western Europe devastated by the war, and in the south, in the economically backward countries caught up in a struggle for national independence, struggling to emerge from the system of British imperialism in serious decay and the yoke of European colonialism.

The context for this concern and the efforts to launch the idea of development and the project of international cooperation, was provided by the emergence of a group of economically backward countries in the postcolonial (or decolonising) global south, and the geopolitical concern of the leaders of the western capitalist democracies for the possible demonstration effect of the Soviet Union which had shown a disturbing capacity and with the potential of becoming an industrial power and a model of economic development. To head of this potential the leaders of the western countries, led by the US, which had emerged from the war as an industrial and political superpower, accounting for over one third of the world's industrial productive capacity and one half of the financial resources (monetary, gold and currency reserves) available to mobilise this capacity, met in Bretton Woods, Maryland, to design an international order for the process of capitalist development (Semmens, 2002).<sup>6</sup>

As it turned out the creation of the Bretton Woods system in 1944 and the project of international cooperation a few years later gave way to several decades of relatively uninterrupted capitalist development with rates of system-wide economic growth averaging 5% a year. There are a number of unsettled questions about this «golden age of capitalism» (Marglin and Schor, 1990) as to what brought about this growth –whether it was action on the idea of progress or evolution of the system under conditions that no one either conceived or designed or managed to direct or control. In either case, the theory constructed in the mainstream of development thought was that economic growth required and would be activated by actions and government policies designed to increase the rate of savings from national income and the productive investment of this income on a technological conversion of the production apparatus and the development of industry, which was assumed to have a much greater payoff, i.e. re-

<sup>6</sup> With just 6% of the world's population, it had over 59% of the world's developed oil reserves; generated 46% of electricity worldwide; accounted for 38% of world industrial production; and possessed 50% of the world's monetary gold and currency reserves (Semmens, 2002).



turns to investment and income generating capacity, than agriculture. In theory, growth would be brought about through actions in this fashion as well as on the basis of structural change in the form of industrialization, modernization and capitalist development.<sup>7</sup> It was also assumed that an inequality of social conditions in the distribution of national income facilitated growth, stimulating «pro-growth» economic activity. The theory was that widening inequality was the unavoidable price that poor countries would have to pay for the economic development and prosperity that would eventually ensue (Kuznets, 1953).

In this context, the pioneers of development economics advanced several permutations of these ideas that were acted on by the state, government intervention in the economy (to promote productive investment of national income) and a planned approach to the allocation and mobilisation of society's productive resources applied. International «cooperation» for development in this conjuncture (an emerging east-west ideological divide and a «cold war», a struggle and wars of national liberation from colonialism and class rule) took the form of financial and technical assistance, provided on a bilateral basis (channelled from governments in the North and to governments) and largely directed towards infrastructure development and nation-building, economic growth and infrastructure development—to provide a development catalyst in the form of supplementary development finance and technology transfer.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1960s this effort was complemented by a program of integrated rural development, assistance channelled through a complex of private voluntary associations to organisations and communities of the rural poor to provide them with an alternative to joining movements formed to press demands and mobilise for revolutionary change. The footsoldiers of this war were sent in to the front of this war to teach the rural poor the virtues of using elections in their politics, the market in their economics and micro-projects in their search for improvements in their lives—to alleviate their poverty.

The paradigmatic cases of this approach, extended to other parts of the world and generalised in the 1970s in the form of integrated rural development,

<sup>7</sup> In the geopolitical context and institutional framework of the Bretton Woods system, «development» was conceived in conditional terms as relative *progress* in per capita *economic growth* and in structural terms as *industrialisation* and *modernization*. So conceived, «development» entails: i) an increase in the rate of savings and investment—the accumulation of physical and financial capital; ii) investment of this capital in industry (each unit of capital invested in industry, in theory generating up to five times the rate of return on investment in agriculture, with strong multiplier effects on both incomes and employment; iii) in the absence or weakness of an endogenous capitalist class, the state assumes the basic «functions of capital»—investment, entrepreneurship and management; iv) the nationalisation of economic enterprises in strategic industries and sectors; v) an inward orientation of production, which, together with a secular increase in wages and salaries, will expand the domestic market; vi) regulation of this and other markets and the protection (and subsidised support) of the firms that produce for the market, insulating them from the competitive pressures of the world economy; and vii) modernisation of the production apparatus, the state and social institutions, reorienting them towards values and norms that are functional for economic growth.

<sup>8</sup>



were found in Latin America within the framework of the Alliance for Progress instituted by the US government. The aim of this «alliance» was to prevent another Cuba in the region –to provide the rural poor an option or alternative to revolutionary change.

*The Basic Needs paradigm in context (crisis and liberal reform).  
Development in the 1970s*

The 1970s saw a major shift in the development idea –in the way that development was conceived, theorised and acted upon– that reflected or was a response to changing conditions. The most significant change was a system wide production crisis that gave rise to a series of efforts and structural responses in the search for a way out of the crisis. This shift undoubtedly reflected a fundamental change in context. For one thing, the golden age of capitalism was drawing to a close with the onset of a system-wide production crisis that led the engine of economic growth to stall, reducing by one half the rate of growth sustained for some two decades.

Theories of this crisis diverged, as did the strategic and structural responses. A review of the history of these responses and associated developments discloses up to five levels and forms of strategic and structural responses to the crisis. One was for the US government to unilaterally abandon the fixed rate exchange mechanism of the Bretton Woods system and rejig its merchandise trade relations with the country's major competitors in Germany and Japan through a combination of exchange and interest rates (Arrighi, 1982). Other strategic responses included i) a direct assault of capital against labour, abrogating a long-standing social accord on sharing the fruits of any productivity gains, and reducing the share of labour (wages) in national income (Davis, 1984); ii) a strategy of multinational corporate forms of capital (multinational corporations) to relocate labour-intensive production operations overseas closer to sources of cheaper labour, resulting in a new international division of labour (Fröbel et al., 1980); iii) a technological conversion of global production –«productive transformation» on the basis of new computer-based, information-rich and post-fordist technologies (Lipietz, 1997); and iv) structural reform of macroeconomic policies in the direction of neoliberal globalization (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001).

In the wake of these diverse strategic and structural responses development was conceived of not just in terms of economic growth but viewed in its social dimension via the lens provided by the idea of equality in one form or the other. As with the idea of freedom here were essentially the formulation or applications of this idea: a socialist conception reflected in developments in Cuba in one context, and the Indian state of Kerala in another. In the liberal capitalist world order the idea of equality assumed or was given a very different form. Here the



idea of equality materialised as «growth with equity» and «redistributive growth», i.e. as a strategy of equitable development oriented towards the goal of meeting the basic needs of the population and alleviating poverty via a more equitable distribution of income. The mechanisms of development so conceived (as poverty alleviation, meeting basic needs) was progressive structural reform in relation to land ownership and taxation on market-generated income to provide a secondary more equitable distribution by channelling this income into social and development programs.

By the end of the decade, the liberal reformers who had entered the fray with such enthusiasm and confidence, appeared to have lost all of confidence in their own ideas and practice, their operative theory of development (the basic needs paradigm, as Hunt conceives of it) and prescriptions for policy and institutional reform. Some of this widely noted loss of confidence could be attributed to the lack of evident progress in closing the development gap. Another was the all too evident and significant costs of financing their prescribed social and development programs, that pushed many or most governments into a budgetary deficit situation, a fiscal crisis that provided grist for the mill of political opposition and creating conditions for the emergence of economically and socially conservative regimes across the world –notably in the US (Reagan) and the UK (Thatcher)– regimes armed with a neoliberal doctrine of free market capitalist development and model of policy reform. Under these conditions a model of state-led development gave way to a counterrevolution in development thought and practice (Toye, 1987).

### *Developments in the New World Order*

The call for a new world order in which the forces of economic freedom would be released from the undue constraints of the development state, and its installation in the early 1980s, was launched as part of what would become known as the «Washington Consensus» (Williamson, 1990) on correct policy –structural reforms in national policy designed to restore the free market in its rightful and important role of allocating resources across the system, determining who gets what by «getting the prices right».

This policy consensus in fact combined the concern of economists at the IMF with restoring macroeconomic equilibrium and for governments to get their finances in order –stabilization measures to control inflation and balance accounts– with the concern of the economists at the World Bank with structural reform, to respond to the on-going unresolved production crisis by reactivating the capital accumulation and economic growth process. The theory was that restoring the free market would reactivate a process of capital accumulation and productive investment, restarting the stalled engine of growth.





The policy agenda derived from this theory, designed by the economists at the World Bank and widely implemented in the 1980s and 1990s under the Washington and post-Washington Consensus, had seven components: 1) a «realistic» rate of currency exchange (that is, devaluation) and measures to *stabilize* the economy –tight fiscal and monetary policies; 2) *privatization* of the means of production and state enterprises, reverting the nationalisation policy of the development state; 3) the *liberalization* of capital markets and trade, reversing the policy of state protection and opening up domestic firms to free competition and market prices; 4) *deregulation* of private economic activity, reducing thereby the impact of government regulations on the operations of market forces; 5) *labour market reform*—reduced regulation and employment protection, erosion of minimum wages, restrictions on collective bargaining and reduced public expenditures; and 6) *downsizing* of the state apparatus, *modernizing* it and *decentralizing* the administration and some decision-making powers to provincial and local levels of government, allowing (in theory) for a more democratic and participatory form of community-based development. The last in these «steps to hell» –to quote Joseph Stiglitz (2002), former chief economist at the World Bank but now a major critic of the IMF’s neoliberal policies—is the institution of 7) a free market in both capital and tradable goods and services, first regionally and then worldwide.

By the end of the decade, actions on this reformulated idea of economic progress on the basis of a consensus on the need for a pro-growth policy agenda had paved the way another north-south wave of private capital flow but this time in the form of foreign direct investment. The flow of capital in the form of new bank loans had slowed to a trickle, overshadowed by the rather substantial reverse flow of payment on the debt, which, for many countries over the course of the decade consumed well over 50% of their export revenues,<sup>9</sup> drastically reducing the flow of capital available for productive investment. One result was a «decade lost to development».

In the case of Latin America it would take at least six years, and in some cases close to a decade of stabilization and structural reform measures (privatization, deregulation, liberalisation) to induce the multinational corporations to reactivate the flow of direct investment. Developments in the region in the first half of the next decade would tell the tale. From 1990 to 1996 the volume of foreign direct investment flows to Latin America grew by leaps and bounds. Attracted by favourable conditions of policy reform and the opportunities provided by a second round of privatizations to purchase the assets of some of the most lucrative firms in the strategic sectors of the regional economy—banking,

<sup>9</sup> This «development» to a considerable extent was the outcome of the concerted efforts of the IMF and the World Bank to ensure the capacity of the indebted countries to service the external debt by socialising the debt and promoting the opening of their economies to the world market and expanded exportation of the social product.



telecommunications, extraction and processing, and manufacturing—the flows increased by a factor of six in the first half of the decade. Although the inflow of capital in the form of foreign direct investment, portfolio investments managed by the international financial institutions, and even bank loans and ODA, would continue in the second half of the decade when the privatization bonanza had largely played out, these flows were counterposed by a reverse outflow in the visible form of debt repayment, repatriated profits, payment of royalty fees, and invisible or disguised forms of labour exportation and «free trade». Over the course of the decade it is estimated that the accumulated outflow of capital in its visible and documented financial form exceeded 100 billion dollars for the region as a whole (Saxe-Fernández and Omar Núñez (2001).

#### TOWARDS A NEW PARADIGM: THE SEARCH FOR ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT

In the 1980s development thinking proceeded along two lines within the dominant paradigm. In previous decades the dominant form of development thinking and analysis might be termed «structuralist» in one form or the other –East European and Latin American in the main. Within the dominant paradigm a structuralist approach was manifest in the theory that the economic and social structure of societies in the economically backward areas of would become known as the «third world» (today the «global south») inhibited «development» in one way or the other and would require institutional reform and planned actions by the state to activate.

Given the weakness or absence of institutional development regarding the market and the lack of a capitalist class responsible for the «function of capital» –investment, entrepreneurship and enterprise management– it was generally assumed that the state would have to step in and replace the private sector in this regard. On the other side of the debate on development economics could be found proponents of the theory that the problem was not in the economic structure of society as much as the lack of institutional support for the market, which, if left to operate freely would ultimately lead to improvements and change –and a more optimal distribution of society’s productive resources. In the 1960s this liberal non-structuralist line was maintained almost alone by Alfred Schultz, a prominent member of the neoliberal thought collective organized by Von Hayek. But by 1980, in the context of what was perceived to be the failures of state-led development, government intervention in the economy and interference with the market (via regulations and protectionism etc.), Schultz’s solitary voice was joined by many others, giving rise to what Toye (1987) and others view as a conservative counterrevolution in development thinking and practice –and a new world order based on neoliberal globalization.



The turn towards neoliberal globalization was but one of several new currents of development thinking within the mainstream. Another current or line of thinking could be viewed as and termed «social liberalism» (rather than «neoliberalism»). While neoliberalism could be seen as another formulation of the «idea of (economic) progress, an extension of the paradigm of the expanding capitalist nucleus (Hunt, 1989), this social liberal line of development thinking entailed a fusion of the ideas of equity (equality of opportunity) and freedom (expansion of choice) within an emerging basic needs paradigm (Fukuda-Parr, Sakiko & Kumar, 2004; Griffin and Knight, 1989; Sen, 1989, 1999; Haq, 1995; Stewart, 2008).

Within the institutional and policy framework of this paradigm (see Hunt, 1989 on the two versions –reformist and radical– of this school of thought) there emerged the search for an alternative form of development initiated from below and within rather than from above and the outside. By the end of the decade this search for «another development» had assumed the form and scale of a global movement concerned with creating a «new paradigm» in development thinking and practice (Chopra Kadekodi & Murty 1990). Thinking about development within this «new paradigm» took diverse forms but was unified by a general agreement in principle, a fundamental consensus that development should be equitable and socially inclusive, human in scale and form, sustainable in terms of the environment and livelihoods, participatory and empowering of the poor, capacitating them to act for themselves, to be the agents of their own development (Cohen and Uphoff, 1977).

With this consensus, and on this conceptual foundation of the ideas of equity and freedom, the search for «another development» was advanced in several directions and the construction of several models. The most consequential model, as it turned out, was constructed by the economists<sup>10</sup> associated with the UNDP, which in 1990 initiated an annual publication of its *Human Development Report* dedicated to the monitoring of the progress made by different countries in the direction of «human development», a development regime that «put(s) people at the centre of development», designed so as to allow people to «realiz(e) their potential, increase(e) their choices and enjoy... the freedom to lead lives they value» (UNDP, 2009).

As with the 2008 World Development Report (discussed below), the HDR-09 focuses on migration as a major pathway out of rural poverty entrenched in the economic and social institutional structure of a society in transition. As with the WDR-08 the major avenue of social mobility and mechanism for development, for the expansion of the choices available to individuals and capacitating them to take advantage of their opportunities, identified in the HDR-09 is education.

Migration, both within and beyond national borders, has become an increasingly prominent theme in domestic and international debates, and is the topic of

<sup>10</sup> Including and in particular Fukuda-Parr, Sakiko, Kumar, Griffin, Knight, Sen, Haq and Stewart.



the 2009 *Human Development Report* (HDR-09). The starting point of this report is that the global distribution of capabilities is extraordinarily unequal, and that this is a major driver for the movement of people, a major incentive to migrate. Migration can expand an individual's choices –in terms of incomes, accessing services and participation, for example. But the opportunities open to people vary from those who are best endowed to those with limited skills and assets. These underlying inequalities are rooted in the institutional structure of society but can be compounded by policy distortions. This is a major theme of the report.

The HDR-09 investigates migration in the context of demographic changes and trends in both growth and inequality. It also presents more detailed and nuanced individual, family and village experiences, and explores less visible movements typically pursued by disadvantaged groups such as short term and seasonal migration.

The HDR-09 reviews a range of evidence about the positive impacts of migration on human development through such avenues as increased household incomes and improved access to education and health services. The authors of the report argue with presented evidence that migration can empower traditionally disadvantaged groups, in particular women. At the same time, the report cautions, there are risks to human development present where and when migration is a reaction to threats and the denial of choice, and where regular opportunities for movement are constrained.

In the context of these constraints, the report argues, national and local policies can play a critical role in enabling better human development outcomes for both those who choose to move in order to improve their circumstances, and those forced to relocate due to conflict, environmental degradation, or for other reasons. For one thing, host country restrictions can raise both the costs and the risks of migration. Similarly, negative outcomes can arise at the country levels where basic civic rights, such as voting, schooling and health care are denied to those who have moved across provincial lines to work and live. The HDR-09 shows how a human development approach can be a means to redress some of the underlying issues that erode the potential benefits of mobility and forced migration.

*Development thought and practice in the 1990s  
and the new millennium under a post-Washington Consensus*

The 1980s, a decade «lost to development» in that the revenues generated by an expansion of export-oriented growth were largely used to service the external debt rather than invest productively and per capita income at the end of the decade barely reached levels achieved in the late 1970s, saw the advent of a new



(neoliberal) world order designed according to a Washington Consensus on correct (i.e. pro-growth) policy. The decade also saw the advent of protest movements and the organisation and mobilisation of diverse forces of resistance against the neoliberal policy agenda and the forces of change unleashed by this agenda. In the vortex of these opposing forces the architects of the neoliberal world order and the social liberal critics of this order came together in the search of a new policy agenda and a regime that might be sustainable –a new policy consensus. It would take most of the decade to work out the details but a new post-Washington consensus soon emerged. Its basic elements included a belief that neoliberalism had «gone too far» in the direction of the free market and that the state had to be «brought back in» so as to secure a «better balance between the state and the market» (Ocampo, 2007) and a more socially inclusive form of neoliberalism. Essentially, the aim was to give the process of structural adjustment a «human face», requiring decentred but capable state» with a «joined-up decentralized governance» (Craig and Porter, 2006).

The new policy agenda based on this post-Washington Consensus and a new development paradigm was defined by the following measures, implemented, as it transpired, by virtually every government or policy regime formed in the 1990s. First, governments needed to stay the course on pro-growth policy –market-friendly «structural reform»– privatisation, economic opening and integration, market deregulation of product and capital markets and labour reform; the liberalisation of trade and capital flows; productive transformation and the modernisation (technological conversion) of agriculture. Secondly, there was the need of a «new social policy» that targeted the poor, to ensure that they would share in the benefits of growth –pro-poor pro-growth (Lopez, 2004). In fact, in the 1990s virtually every government in the region implemented a version of this new social policy on the Chilean model.

Another policy under the emerging new consensus was to foment a more participatory and sustainable form of development on the institutional basis of administrative decentralisation, a policy instituted by Augusto Pinochet in the mid-1970s but constructed by the economists at the World Bank (Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema, 1983). The aim of this policy was twofold, depending on the context; i) the municipalisation of development–to capacitate local governments in the shared responsibility for economic and social development; and ii) empowerment of the poor, enabling and capacitating them to act for themselves in the context of their localities and communities–to institute a community-based form of local development based on the accumulation of the one asset or form of capital («social») that the poor were deemed to have in abundance–their capacity to work collectively and cooperate on the basis of relations and social bonds of reciprocal exchange forged in a culture of social solidarity (Ocampo, 2004; Woolcock, 1988; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000).

By the end of the decade this new policy agenda was widely instituted in a strategy designed, as was the integrated rural development approach back in the



1970s, to turn the rural poor away from the social movements (Veltmeyer and Petras, 2005). To implement this reform strategy within the framework of a «new paradigm» the economists at the World Bank and their strategic partners in the UN system designed an overarching Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF), and, within this framework a new policy tool –the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), introduced to the «development community» at the 1999 G8 Summit.<sup>11</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Although unheralded, the turn into the new millennium represented a watershed in development thinking and practice. Five decades of development –three under the auspices and with the agency of the development state, and two inside the «new world order»– had brought about a major realignment of different countries in a global development divide but little to no change in what the UN (2005) had identified as the «inequality predicament»: a grossly unequal distribution of productive resources and incomes across the world, under growing conditions of wealth and poverty at both extremes of this distribution.

Five decades of diverse development efforts, government expenditures and investments in human and financial resources, and three decades into the World Bank's vaunted war against global poverty, with little to show except a tortuous history of development ideas and practices tacking to the winds of change.

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<sup>11</sup> This and the other PWC policy tools were shaped with reference to four fundamental principles agreed to by the leading lights and officials of the «development community» in a series of meetings behind closed doors from 1987 to 1989 with members of the Bolivian government of Bolivia to consider the country's development problematic as well as clear evidence from across the region that the vaunted structural adjustment program was in serious jeopardy. These principles reflected a consensus on the need for a more human and sustainable, and above all governable, form of structural adjustment or neoliberalism. According to a Report made available at the time by Denmark's representative, a cooperant in this project, the UNDP model of «sustainable human development», was constructed with reference to three basic principles: i) *productivity-competitiveness* (to improve the productivity of Bolivia's major economic (i.e. business) enterprises and ensure their ability to compete in the world market); ii) *social integration-equity* (to broaden the social base of national production, improving access to means of production of diverse groups of producers beyond the small stratum of big well-capitalised enterprises privileged by, and benefiting from, neoliberal policies); and iii) *state action-governability* (to ensure political order with as little government as possible, i.e. via the strengthening of civil society and participation in public policy).



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