

***Development Today: Towards the Construction of New Paradigms*, María del Carmen del Valle Rivera (coord.), *Problemas del Desarrollo Book Collection*, Mexico, Institute for Economic Research - UNAM, 2014.**

As María del Carmen del Valle (coord.) noted well, the principal virtue of this book, edited by the Institute for Economic Research of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, is its contribution to the development debate, both now and in the future. With a variety of perspectives and topics, its authors—Raúl Vázquez, Araceli Damián, Alfredo Guerra, Javier Sanz, Alicia Puyana, Pierre Salama and Enrique Casais—revisit some of the ingredients of the prevailing economic policy of the second half of the twentieth century, marked by import substitution industrialization, which, according to its masterminds, would generate positive externalities for other activities, like agriculture, that were considered less productive. Then, at the end of the 1970s, the concepts coined by structuralist economists, many of them tied to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), lost steam, and with it, the advent of the new liberalism, vindicating the role of the market and challenging the function of the State as the market regulator, ushering in new dynamics of global accumulation in the hands of major multinational corporations; moreover, as the acclaimed economist José Luis Ceceña insistently asserted, all of this happened in a framework, in turn, in which the Soviet model was collapsing, expressed in prolonged stagnation, and characterized by an economic slowdown and deteriorating social welfare conditions.

The participants in this editorial exercise continue our journey through history with the Washington Consensus, whose public discourse ostensibly sought to resolve the debt problem facing the American continent, but whose concealed intent was to pave the way for the proposals of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This process was buoyed up by the ECLAC, which shifted from a penchant for structuralism towards discretely neoliberal inclinations, burying the development/equality duality, and leading to the emergence of the open market model and new regionalism to facilitate the circulation of goods, in a process of global economic insertion. The sale and/or liquidation of public enterprises, the repeal of development programs for small industries and rural and regional development, reduced funding for the social sector of the economy, the easing of restrictions on opening the economy to international companies, the end of endogenous industrialization and import substitution, constitutional amendments to ease the concerns of private investors in rural areas, linkages between the banking system and transnational financial corporations: all of these were signs of an abrupt change, which took place in the context of new strategies for regional insertion propelled by the United States, as Abraham Lowenthal and Gregory Trevorton warned in the twilight of the twentieth century.

Finally, this analytical compendium shows readers how the economic policies and neoliberal radicalism of the first 15 years of the twenty-first century have prompted unemployment, wage deterioration—even as the earnings of capital owners have grown—, financial over-accumulation

driven by the banking system, and the withdrawal of the State in response to market mandates. All of these factors have, instead of development, brought about inequality and poverty.

Because I hold the firm conviction that universities, especially public universities, should be intimately in touch with the concrete reality, the environment, and society in which they exist, and should consequently exist as a space for criticism and proposals for economic and social policy to achieve justice, liberty, and welfare, I feel obliged to describe a few of the emotions and memories related to my professional life that came to the surface as I read this book, and urge others to do the same, and not only students and scholars, but also anyone and everyone who strives on a daily basis, whether through the State or society, to achieve economic and social development for Mexico, while making sure that we do not fall into the trap of idealizing the past, as Tzvetan Todorov wisely warns in his work, *The Uses and Abuses of Memory*.

My mind wanders back first to the 1970s, in the age of industrialization, regional development, and import substitution policies. In this context, I took part in the *Huicot Plan*, oriented towards modernizing the Cora and Huichol indigenous groups, which simultaneously improved their welfare and caused cultural destruction. I recall my subsequent relationship with the producers locked in tense engagement with the public enterprise *Tabamex* and agro export and tourism promotion companies along the coast of the state of Nayarit, my work at the end of the 1960s for the Comprehensive Rural Development Program (PIDER) with a micro-regional vision, distorted by the times and the clientelist manipulation of the governors. The state of Guerrero in the 1980s also comes to mind, where we bore the ruin of the development/equality duality and heard the first timid murmurs of neoliberalism; there, led by Alejandro Cervantes Delgado as governor, and a few allied officials, academics, and promoters tied to renowned non-governmental organizations, we resisted neoliberal pressure and built a new state model for the government to play a role in the economy and rural and regional development, but not without a few missteps along the way. Of course, paradoxically, even though our views were opposed to those of the federal government, this did not get in the way of making our ideas reality, because in Latin America, at the same time as open regionalism was on the rise, so too was a desire for democracy, and in the state of Guerrero we were shifting from violence, guerrilla warfare, and authoritarianism to pluralist and inclusive consensus.

This also brings me to reflect upon my work, later on, in the state of Morelos, in the *National Solidarity Program*, which, despite its deficiencies, managed to raise social welfare with the active participation of the citizenry, exactly as I wrote about and published with Roberto Escalante in 1994 in the journal *Investigación Económica*, edited by the UNAM, believing that with this we had gained ground on the Nobel Prize-winning proposals coming out of the University of Chicago and the think tanks tied to foundations tied, in turn, to major corporations, which Rolando Cordera and Carlos Tello point out in the prologue of the new edition of their book, *Mexico: The Dispute for the*

Nation. The *Solidarity* program was transformed into a simultaneously welfare-oriented and compensatory monetary transfer program, which have not managed to reduce poverty, a sure sign of our ingenuity from back then.

When I read the book *Development Today*, I was also reminded of how, in the community where I live—which is part of the universe of the experiences of people working on local and territorial development anchored in food sovereignty and collective action, as explained in the book—political parties, as part of the new neoliberal dynamic, have contributed to the rapid unraveling of the social fabric by failing to respect the culture, uses, and customs of the people, and by pushing communities to join the market and bargaining for votes, as I described along with Paulina Fernández Christlieb in the book *The Indigenous Movement in Latin America*, edited in 2006 by Juan Pablos and coordinated by Raquel Gutiérrez and Fabiola Escárzaga.

I will conclude by saying that, when I line up my experiences with those described in the book, I can clearly see how important and useful it will be in designing new economic and social policies for Mexico and building up local and territorial processes, to satisfy the physiological needs of the people, as well as those needs related to self-esteem, safety and security, emotions, and self-realization, so that neoliberalism will step aside and in its place human beings will flourish, exactly as suggested in this book.

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