DEVELOPMENT – concept and impacts on community based research and researchers.

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DEVELOPMENT and its assistance are the bases to understand how we are coping and struggling with the ongoing crises of poverty, health, education, finance, environment and governance among many others. In this article we aim to make a comparison among research based knowledge on development as well as a theoretical discussion regarding the study and understanding of this concept from some distinguished authors. We want to establish a connection between the theoretical concept and the community based knowledge in order to find new or broader parameters on the application of development concept and its policies. Development is the ultimate goal of every human being. The problem is that each of us has a different goal to achieve our own development. How society perceives and brings forward these multiple perspectives is important for each individual and relevant for each society in order to achieve its goals. This becomes more complicated as we deal with globalization, where the develop world sets the *tune* for all society goals. These goals are establish by the developed world and usually lead to misunderstandings towards the developing world and its own parameters and aspects of development.

With that in mind, we worked with community informants. We asked them what development is for them. For instance, someone answered that it depends because for him it has many aspects. He had difficulties to formulate a broad answer but was able to mention specific issues such as education for his children, housing, and so on. Looking at the development concept we can understand that the difficulties of the informant are the same as ours. In fact development has become such a broad concept that we have to refine it to a specific point where we can communicate what we think about it. Working with communities where we use the multidisciplinary approach we came upon questions like: what is the best aspect of the concept that will be more suited for our work? How such a broad concept can be better understood by those who most need to improve their lives? How can we understand and use the knowledge of this concept regarding development policies, projects and programs?

These are questions that we are trying to answer in two different levels. First we are going to present a study of the concept regarding distinguished scholars like Prof. Joseph Stiglitz, Prof. Arturo Escobar and Prof. Ignacy Sachs. For us they represent distinctive approaches towards our subject. At the same time we will be using a survey that is being done among communities in Brazil and Nicaragua, regarding their own view of their own development process. This research is being done with the support of University of California – Berkeley, Department of Natural Resources, Nitlapan Institute in Nicaragua and Federal University of Bahia, Brazil, Anthropology Department and Business School. We expect to bring forward aspects that are not considered in the development process dictated by the globalized world. The aim is to find methodologies that will enable the full participation of excluded populations on the development process as well as turning it into a more transparent, democratic and inclusive one.

There is no agreement about the concept, most of all when we deal with sustainable development and its impacts on traditional communities. We always start the approach with our scientific and globalized paradigms. This restricts the communities’ participatory process towards their sustainable development goals. For Stiglitz, for instance development aims at a strategic change in societies to assure the political transformation from an underdeveloped society to a modern and sustainable one. The aim is to turn these communities into *modern* societies and part of the globalized world as a way to prevent poverty and iniquities.

On the other hand an author like Escobar is thinking and talking about post development meaning that we have to conceive and rebuilt our world from local practices and goals. The
aim for him is to take out capitalism from the center stage of development and through a new development model, change the approach of the subject from global to the local.

In the Brundtland report, sustainable development is the capacity to meet the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations. But, how do we define what the need for the present is? and for the future? Ignacy Sachs brings us some possibilities on this subject. Sachs defines development from an eco-political, economic and sociologic point of view. For him development must be endogenous, which is self-sufficient and meeting the community’s needs, instead of the markets.

Using these approaches and the letter exchange among communities in the northeast of Brazil we will have a better understanding of how these communities perceive their development and the policies implemented towards it. In this way, we may provide hints to enrich the discussion so to integrate new perspectives and goals toward real development for all.

SOURCES –


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