

TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT, READINGS, CONCEPTS AND MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES!

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Book review: Dallabrida, Valdir Roque. *Development, to be or not to be, that is the question!* Ideas to rethink the current understanding of development and validate the notion of “territorial development”. Curitiba: CRV, 2024. 128 p.

The book proposes a profound reflection on current conceptions of development, questioning the validity of traditional models that still employ economic growth as their main criterion. Inspired by the frustration of decades of studies and publications that are limited to distorted and disciplinary views, Valdir Roque Dallabrida offers an innovative perspective: territorial development as a possibility for progress. This approach places sustainability, happiness and the common good at the forefront, considered here as building blocks of any truly transformative socioeconomic strategy.

With a renowned academic career and empirical experience in educational and community leadership, the author uses accessible language aimed at both academic readers and the general public, and challenges academic conventions by seeking to simplify concepts that are often isolated in specialized jargon. The

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proposal is clear: it is possible to rethink development critically, overcoming the hegemonic, Eurocentric and colonizing paradigms that still influence much of Western thought.

Thus, by adopting an interdisciplinary and counter-hegemonic approach, the book establishes a dialogue with authors such as geographer Dr. Marcos Saquet, who proposed an “in(sub)version” of the understanding of development. This cognitive shift advocates overcoming colonialist models and creating new ways of thinking about territory and the economy in order to build more just, sustainable and happy societies.

In the first chapter, titled *Understanding what development is, revisiting personal publications – Part one*, Dallabrida presents the concept of development and revisits contributions from his own research and publications over the decades. To refer to the development process of a municipality or region, the author highlights that he will use the term “territorial development”, a relevant point for understanding his arguments. Dallabrida also makes bold criticisms of the capitalist model and its negative social, political and environmental impacts, proposing a new paradigm based on sustainability, happiness and the common good.

Territorial autonomy is another central idea addressed in this chapter – Dallabrida advocates the active participation of local communities so that they can create their own modes of development without subordination to global interests. The author also discusses territorial innovation, which he believes – and rightly so – should benefit people’s daily and productive lives, integrating the concept of territorial intelligence and promoting collective learning among society, companies, the State and universities.

With an interdisciplinary approach, the chapter highlights the need for an understanding of development that goes beyond traditional views that limit the debate to economic dimensions. It is, therefore, a vigorous defense of development that is at the same time socially fair, environmentally sustainable and politically inclusive.

The second chapter, titled *Understanding what development is, revisiting personal publications – Part two*, addresses corporate governance in territorial development and focuses on the concept of territorial governance. In it, the author highlights the importance of the participation of local stakeholders in the planning and management of territories, promoting a democratic and inclusive process that involves the public sector and the society. Practical examples include the analysis of the Northwest Border Region (RS), where new institutions were created to facilitate dialogue among the civil society, the public and the private sectors, which resulted in the creation of the Regional Development Forum and innovative strategic planning.

The concept of territorial governance, formally introduced in 2003, is presented as the articulation of different social groups to manage territories, defend their interests and promote development. The author also highlights the importance of adapting this governance to the digital age, in order to empower territorial stakeholders to deal with new challenges.

Finally, *the chapter discusses territorial heritage*, defined as the material and immaterial resources historically accumulated in a territory, and suggests that the activation of this heritage is fundamental for territorial development. For Dallabrida, paraphrasing the Italian author Alberto Magnaghi, the territory is seen as a living system, whose identity needs to be preserved and continually revalued. As one can see, this is an extremely relevant topic for our times!

In chapter 3, titled *Indicators for achieving development based on the contributions of Brazilian economist Celso Furtado*, Dallabrida focuses on the contributions of Celso Furtado,

a renowned Brazilian economist whose ideas have influenced discussions on development in Latin American countries, especially in underdeveloped regions. Furtado's criticism of the concentration of productive power and the idea that underdevelopment is a historical problem that can only be overcome through a political project based on a solid knowledge of social reality are particularly striking. In this same perspective, Dallabrida revisits Brandão's concepts, which complement this view: Brandão emphasizes that development is a multidimensional process that must begin in local communities, but also take into account changes at national and international levels.

Chapter 4, *Guiding principles of the development process: on sustainability*, explores the premises of sustainable development, emphasizing the importance of the conscious use of natural resources to ensure the well-being of future generations. To encourage discussion, Dallabrida emphasizes that discussions on sustainability are based on views such as the Biocentric one, which values nature as an intrinsic entity, and the criticism of the Coevolutionary one, which sees natural resources as almost infinitely replaceable.

Without focusing solely on these issues, which would already be an admirable proposal, Dallabrida also addresses other views, such as Ecocentrism, which recognizes the interdependence of all forms of life, and Sentientism, which prioritizes the ethics of animal welfare. Although anthropocentric ethics are still predominant in many sectors, new positions that value the environment are emerging, a fact that reflects the need for a change in mentality.

Special attention is given to the agricultural and livestock sector, which faces tensions between productivity and environmental impacts – a discussion that is particularly relevant to our current context. As is widely known, industrial agriculture, although productive, causes serious pollution and contamination problems. In contrast, agroecology is presented as a viable alternative, as it integrates traditional and scientific knowledge to promote sustainable agricultural practices.

Finally, the concept of regenerative agriculture is highlighted as a promising model that aims to restore soil health and biodiversity. The challenge is to transform the current economic view into one that values sustainability, ensuring a more balanced future for the generations to come.

In Chapter 5 of the book, *Guiding principles of the development process: on the common good, common use goods and well-being*, Dallabrida explores the principles that underpin development, focusing on the idea of the common good, common use goods and well-being. As is widely known, the notion of the common good is an alternative to individual or corporate interests. Basically, as the author rightly points out, the common good encompasses everything that is of public interest, that is, everything that can bring benefits to society as a whole, not restricted to a small group. In this context, Dallabrida revisits author Elinor Ostrom, who makes an important contribution by introducing the concept of "common use resources".

Another aspect that deserves to be highlighted is the specific knowledge of a people that is passed down from generation to generation - this knowledge can manifest itself in cookery, such as traditional recipes, or in handicraft techniques, for example. In addition, cultural events and festivals that celebrate the history and traditions of a region also fall into this category of common use goods.

Therefore, like natural resources, Dallabrida reminds us that man-made resources need to be preserved and protected to ensure that they can benefit everyone, both in the present and the future. This preservation is essential in discussing development, especially sustainable development. By promoting the appreciation of these goods, we contribute to a more just and balanced society, where the well-being of everyone is prioritized.

Chapter 6, *Guiding principles of the development process: on happiness*, in turn, leads the reader to reflect on happiness and its essential connection with development. The author, with great sensitivity, begins this chapter by presenting a provocative definition of happiness, taken from a research paper by renowned psychiatrists: “Happiness is a basic emotion characterized by a positive emotional state, with feelings of well-being and pleasure, associated with the perception of success and a coherent and lucid understanding of the world.” This passage not only defines the concept, but also makes us realize how happiness is formed by values, intertwining well-being, joy and a sense of accomplishment.

In this sense, the author emphasizes that happiness is a subjective experience, a notion that resonates with many readers, as it invites us to understand that it does not depend exclusively on external factors. The recognition that being happy is not necessarily linked to financial conditions or a high standard of living is a crucial point that he skillfully elaborates, although Dallabrida also emphasizes that it is difficult to be happy in situations of material insecurity. Quoting Cremonese, the author makes us reflect on happiness as a personal pursuit, devoid of molds imposed by society.

The way the author connects happiness with development is remarkable. He invites us to think that the success of a society is not only measured by economic indicators, but also by the well-being and satisfaction of its citizens. This chapter is an ode to the idea that, for sustainable development, it is essential that everyone have the opportunity to pursue their own definitions of happiness. The clarity and depth of the reflections presented make this chapter not only a read, but a true journey of self-discovery and collective understanding. We daringly affirm that this chapter is an irresistible invitation for each of us to rethink our own notion of happiness and how we can contribute to collective happiness.

In Chapter 7: *A critique of development approaches and possible advances in validating the territorial approach*, the author presents an incisive critical analysis of traditional development approaches, making room for necessary reflections and possible advances in the field, especially in validating the territorial approach. The author masterfully and clearly exposes the limitations of current studies, which continue to privilege the economic bias at the expense of a broader and more integrated view of development. He not only highlights this criticism, but also emphasizes that, unfortunately, this debate is still restricted to limited academic circles.

In this chapter, the author also presents us with the innovative proposal of the Multidimensional Index of Territorial Heritage Activation (IMAP), a methodology that represents a significant advance in the implementation of the territorial approach to development. The idea of “activation” brought by this proposal invites us to transform resources that are not yet used into territorial assets that aim to contribute to development in a comprehensive manner — both in the socio-productive sense and in improving the quality of life of the people who live in the territory.

The author takes us, in an intriguing way, through the principles that support this multidimensional approach, discussing central themes such as environmental sustainability, inclusion and equanimity, innovation and autonomy, among others. Each of these principles is carefully articulated within a theoretical framework that engages with contemporary theories, such as the New Systems Theory and Complexity Theory. These fields of knowledge not only enrich the debate, but also serve as a beacon of light that points to new possibilities for planning and building desirable futures in territories or regions.

The way in which the author builds this discussion, balancing theory and practice, is worthy of recognition. Dallabrida offers a clear view on how we can overcome limited disciplinary approaches and move towards a more comprehensive understanding, capable of embracing the multiple dimensions of territorial reality. This chapter not only proposes, but also challenges the reader to rethink development, questioning traditional models and presenting us with a promising path that is more aligned with the demands of the contemporary world.

Chapter 8, *Some practical examples of what development is or is not*, presents a critical reflection on contemporary development and highlights the difference between economic growth and development. For this purpose, the author explains how the current capitalist model promotes ecologically destructive and socially unjust practices, such as forest fires and the devastation of native forests. Dallabrida then points out the need for regulation and questions the narratives that celebrate agribusiness as a solution.

The chapter also mentions agroecological practices and regenerative agriculture initiatives as viable alternatives, highlighting that it is possible to cultivate sustainably and promote the health of communities. Ultimately, the author encourages us to rethink our conceptions of development, proposing a focus on quality of life and social justice, and inspires us to be agents of change for a better future.

Chapter 9, titled *The Territorial approach to overcoming the traditional view of development*, invites us to rethink the way we understand and experience territories. The author begins his reflection by quoting the renowned geographer Milton Santos, who in one of his texts alerted us to the importance of territory as the space where human actions and emotions fully manifest. It is a powerful statement that reminds us that each place carries with it the history and culture of those who live there.

Revisiting Bruno Jean, in his 2015 analysis, Dallabrida complements this idea by stating that a territory only comes to life when it is named and recognized. This is not just a naming exercise, but rather the beginning of a process of identification that shapes both individual and collective identity. This perspective leads us to realize that a territory is not just a physical space, but a true social fabric, full of ties and interactions that go beyond its natural characteristics.

In this chapter, the author sets out to explore what characteristics define a territory, drawing on a series of publications that enrich his argument. What stands out is the defense of a territorial approach that transcends traditional analyses, which are often limited to sectoral or disciplinary dimensions. This integrated approach is essential for understanding the complexity of socioeconomic, cultural and environmental realities, since it allows us to recognize that each of these dimensions is interconnected and interdependent.

The chapter encourages us to view development in a more holistic manner, in which social interactions, economic conditions and environmental characteristics are intertwined.

By proposing this new perspective, the author suggests that we consider that development should not only be measured in economic terms, but also by the quality of relationships and the construction of local identities. This is a valuable contribution to the field and encourages us to seek more sustainable and inclusive solutions to contemporary challenges.

Finally, Chapter 10, titled *Final words*, closes the book with a call for deep reflection on what “development” really means. The author begins with the conviction that his work is a valuable contribution, not only for academics, but also for students and citizens in general, who often still confuse development with economic growth. This distinction is essential, as mentioned earlier, and the author calls for the content of this book to be discussed in all classrooms, from early childhood education to graduate school. We dare say that reading this work would have transformative impacts, as it introduces essential concepts for a broader and more sustainable understanding of development!

Furthermore, the author leads us to reflect on the idea of utopia, not as a distant dream, but as a real possibility that can be achieved through new forms of socioeconomic and political organization, always respecting the needs of the population and the environment. This view is inspiring and shows us that it is possible to dream of a better future, as long as we have the courage to act.

The chapter also highlights the valuable contributions of Celso Furtado, who alerted us to the historical disconnect between growth and development in Brazil. Furtado emphasizes in his publications that true development is the result of an “underlying social project,” built from the bottom up, and that market action alone is not enough. The return to Furtado’s ideas is a powerful reminder that development requires planning and intentionality!

Finally, Dallabrida emphasizes that ignoring scientific warnings can lead to social catastrophes, such as those we have already witnessed in various parts of the world. This statement resonates deeply, making us question what we are willing to do to prevent such tragedies in the future. It is a call for action, which encourages us to listen to and value the knowledge produced in universities.

In conclusion, the author calls on us to rethink our understanding of development and imagine other ways of being in the world that prioritize social, economic and environmental well-being. This message of hope and commitment is an invitation for all of us to build a more just and sustainable world.

Therefore, “*Development, to be or not to be, that is the question!*” is a call for us to critically rethink the foundations of what we understand by progress and growth. With robust theoretical references, but in accessible language, the book challenges the reader to question the *status quo* and to engage in a process of redefining development, focusing on the territory and the complexity of human relations.

We highly recommend reading it!

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