

Imposing is Inherently Undemocratic

A need to deconstruct and demythologize the Western development concept and practices!

Ideas of development and modernization are strongly linked to the dominant discourse of Western modernity. And many post-modernist scholars, such as Tucker (1999) suggest that development cannot claim a universal validity as it is not a transcultural concept. It is a Western monologue conducted with their own mythic self-image that does not allow dialogue with other cultures and societies. Although modernization theorists recognized the importance of the cultural dimension of development, the worth of these cultures were denied; rather, the problem was treated by reducing other cultures to fossilized stereotypes, inert wholes and further manipulate and adapt them to the exigencies of development in a way that controls the destinies of Other peoples.

These political and cultural 'Others' were written out of history as well as denied a history of their own apart from history of Western civilization and progress. By doing so, the right of these 'Others' to define their own development remains under the monopoly of those who control the production of the so-called "truth" and "knowledge".

By legitimizing this unequal relationship between those who claim "advanced, civilized, and modern" and those who they labelled "backward, primitive and traditional", modernization seeks to dominate and transform 'Other' cultures according to its worldview. These temporal falls polarities and mutually exclusive metaphors such as "traditional and modern" used to conceptualize Otherness to designate a normative development trajectory.

Hence, in order to catch up and also become modern and developed, the West controls and even created the "Third World" through the production of knowledge by which other societies are judged and moulded. Borrowing Abrahamson's (2003) statement, "the North in general has normalized the right to intervene and control, adapt and shape the structures, practices and ways of life of the South". This

unequal relationship is maintained and reproduced in order for 'Third World' to evolve along a single path towards the modern North.

In other words, the production of "truth" and "knowledge" is dominated by the West by not giving the benefit of doubt to the "truth" and "knowledge" produced in the South. The South, particularly Africa is a case in point where the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) through their modernist and neo-liberalist manifestation continue to dictate and discipline the continent. Africa has been entrapped in a situation where these types of foreign institutions, agencies and a host of INGOs map out, configure and determine its future.

I share Abrahamson's concern and I would further ask the following questions: Isn't imposing own values on other societies inherently undemocratic, for it violates the UN Human Rights Covenant that 'all people have the rights of self-determination, including the right to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development'? Why are Western societies not willing to accept a unique set of values that are peculiar and historical to those societies in the South?

In short, my point was that development theories necessarily have to recognize social diversities, other imaginations, context and heterogeneity of cultures as post-modern approach suggests. The South has a legitimate concern in its own right. Thus, there is a sever need to create a common ground anchored in justice and humanity eliminating dominance before it is too late leaving an irreversible grievance against the West.

Ways forward: the Western-centered development theoretical concept/perspective should be deconstructed and demythologized and replace it with "double or multiple descriptions", which engages each other dialectically in a process of mutual criticism, correction and recognition of context of different societies and incorporation of the experience of Other peoples and perspectives of other cultures into development discourse. The diversity of these values should be appreciated and encouraged. Then we can live in harmony...!

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