

# A new paradigm for development? The issue of human rights and democratic institutions

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abstract

After the post-development literature that led away from growth and accumulation of capital, the last decades have not just shown the limits or frustrations of these views but also opened the door for new criticisms and new proposals for changing societies, and not just their economic structures. This debate has much in common with the one on economic and sustainability indicators. In the present paper we try to relate the concept of development with human rights development and democratic institutions. A final consideration is made about the methodological implications of that transformation. The issue of development must be broadened in historical, disciplinary, and geographical terms. The new paradigm can be extended on several avenues. First, the problem of growth, economic indicators (GDP, among others), and capital accumulation (investment) are still central to the economic management of any country; but this is not enough, if we consider climate change, environmental pollution, and social ailments. A broader conception of societies, human being must be adopted, namely integrating a theory of needs, a new extension of human rights and a deepening of democratic and participative institutions. Second, the concept of development must adopt a historical view of the problems that are analyzed and subject to policy definitions. This means looking at the process of development and historical legacy and not just at outcomes in the short run. Third, the notion of sustainability must gain broader currency, beyond the sustainable development goals. This implies a more integrated approach within countries in the Global South to define, implement and control policies. And this is also only possible with better democratic institutions and human rights compliance. All these connect to the extension of a new generation of human rights and democratic institutions. Some human rights are locally developed such as those of the Banjul Charter or African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and there is space for more. Democratic institutions and participation mean more ingrained and locally embedded approaches that last longer and correspond to local necessities. The present contribution combines human rights and the functioning of democracy and participation in an institutional perspective. It relates to the notion of sustainability that itself is a combination of the natural and the human worlds. Finally, it is important to adopt new methodologies that involve the beneficiaries of the policies, defining with them at least one part of the indicators, thence avoiding top-down approaches, in favor of more bottom-up ones.