

# Indigenous Development Alternatives

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**ABSTRACT:** The author critiques the record of development enterprises of the past and assesses how some theoreticians are beginning to take the priorities of those sectors that were ignored or excluded (women and indigenous peoples) into account in programs that promise to promote human development. The critique of development projects shows that global free trade policies have often subverted the goals of what became “target groups,” undermining the agency of new figures in the global market economy, and distorting their communal goals. Assessing the development goals of Zapatista rebels who oppose neoliberal policies and seek autonomy within their communities, the author suggests that the course of autonomous development is a necessary alternative in the global economy. It not only enhances the life opportunities of indigenous families and communities but can ensure the future of the rainforest environment that they have colonized and the highland villages they have occupied since primordial times.

Development processes, like the imperial and colonial processes that preceded them, involve both an ideology and a practice to justify investment and the extraction of profit on a worldwide basis. In order to overcome the growing wealth gap be-

tween the winners and losers in the process we have to go beyond analyzing and exposing the discourse that promotes inequalities. Ideologies that defend the processes grow like hydra-headed monsters, tangled in the rhetoric of those who would oppose the injustice of unequal exchange. With each inroad made by capital ventures in the remaining semi-subsistence areas of the world, a new ideological format is invented to mask the capitalist premises for reproduction on a global basis. These include the unequal exchange between the developed and undeveloped world, dependency and the subversion of democracy in the periphery, and the shifting of risk to the primary producers. The penetration of capitalist enterprises seeking new sources of oil, minerals, and genetic diversity now threatens to destroy environments that were the reserves of indigenous people.

I will critique three major trends over time in development economics and assess how some theoreticians have provided the ideological rationales for each of them. In the early decades after World War II, development models assumed a unilineal evolution toward industrial capitalist expansion as the unique journey to progress. Investments in capital intensive agriculture and assembly operations proliferated in less developed countries. This trend provided high profit margins to investors in the core industrial countries at the same time that less developed countries experienced a decline in the terms of trade for primary products. The growing dependency of developing countries on global financial and food markets reached a crisis in the 1980s when the second trend in development economics emerged. In this phase, development agencies and the institutional supports provided by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank promoted restructuring programs that shifted the burden of debt to low income producers and service suppliers in the developing economies and to tax payers in metropolitan centers. The critique, especially by anthropologists working at the grassroots level who perceived the

impact of unbalanced growth, grew along with a shift in capital from developing countries to financial centers. We are entering a third phase in which neoliberal capitalist expansion appears to be the uncontested force in global development. In this third phase, theoreticians of development who were ignored in the past and new advocates are beginning to take the priorities of indigenous peoples into account. I argue that the course of autonomous development in this third phase not only enhances the life opportunities of indigenous families and communities, but will ensure the future of the environments that they have preserved since primordial times. This can only be achieved in the context of indigenous autonomy within the nation states in which they are situated, and with cooperation from transnational NGOs and a democratic civil society.

Development programs planned from above alienated indigenous people from their lifeways and environment, often destroying household subsistence practices that ensure the survival of families and life itself. I will bring this critique into perspectives raised by programs that indigenous peoples themselves generate. As custodians, indigenous peoples have proven their knowledge and skill in their continuous residence in environments that are havens for a rich diversity of faunal and floral organisms. This knowledge, and even the genetic diversity that women and men have preserved in the environment, are becoming commoditized as drug companies, geologists, and agronomists try to exploit them to their advantage. Aware of the violence and depredation of earlier penetration of capitalist enterprises, indigenous peoples, particularly women, are contesting capitalist development programs such as Plan Puebla Panama as the unique course. Paradoxically the successful integration of indigenous peoples in the global system will depend on their ties with transnational civil society and the communications networks put in place by globalization processes.

## Development for Whom?

Development economics began shortly after World War II. In 1957 when I was a graduate student at the University of Chicago, I was hired by Bert Hoselitz and Richard Woll as a research assistant in one of the first large-scale study projects to look at development investments in Third World countries. Bert made the mistake of going to MIT and bragging about what they were doing, and when he returned and recounted what a great hit he was in Cambridge, I remember Dick jumping on top of a desk and raging "Bert, you just gave away a half million dollars." He was only half right, because MIT got in a proposal for a million dollars just before the Chicago proposal was finalized and sent to Washington. Chicago did get a few hundred thousand to start their research and to launch their journal, *ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL CHANGE*.

Development economics became a lucrative pursuit in its first decade from 1950 to mid-1960s, as academics invented the ideological base for promoting capitalist development throughout the world. The discourse of modernization presumed that Third World countries (those not aligned with the superpowers in the "Cold War") would, with the right combination of investment and disengagement from traditional pursuits, evolve in the same way as "advanced" capitalist countries. The objective was phrased as a benefit to countries in need of growth, never the need for new sites of investment to maintain the level of return to capital, or the urgency of seeking new consumers and cheap labor for industries in the metropolis. Buttressed with the rhetoric of the Cold War against communism, no alternatives to capitalist enterprise were admitted in policy-making circles where the needs and interests of the countries to be developed were ignored. Progress was defined unilaterally as industrialization in capital intensive enterprises measured in gross national product (GNP). This

meant that only products that reached the market were accounted for since GNP did not measure the domestic production of goods and services for subsistence. As a result, women's work for their families was devalued, and women who persisted in household production of goods and services for their families with limited exchanges were categorized as unemployed. Measurement of growth in development economics was uniquely related to market sales, and unless products reached a market and were exchanged for money, they were not counted. This kind of thinking did not take into account improvements in the human conditions. In Mexico, for example, when President Lázaro Cárdenas implemented the land reform act of the 1917 constitution in the 1930s, it was often treated as a failure since overall production in the country dropped. The fact that peasants ate more and had more leisure time since they did not have to sell their labor on the plantations was not taken into consideration by most development experts.<sup>1</sup>

Walter W. Rostow set the pace for overseas development in 1960 with his book *STAGES OF ECONOMIC GROWTH, A NON-COMMUNIST MANIFESTO*. Inspired by the Cold War with Russia, it brooked no alternatives to capitalist development. Self sufficient household production was not even a reference point for progress since it was assumed that it would collapse of its own inertia. During this decade capitalist expansion into agroindustrial enterprises began to threaten the household production of food for autoconsumption, as petrochemical inputs in fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides were used to increase outputs in the so-called Green Revolution. In Asia, food supplies increased, but not all of the benefits went to poor families. As Joan Mencher (1978) and other feminist critics of development showed, the net negative impact was greatest on women who constituted the major work force in small-scale farms. Their jobs were replaced with technology—huge gas-guzzling tractors, cultivators, and reapers that drove

out most small-scale producers and led to a concentration of land ownership. In Latin America the Green Revolution was delayed by land reform programs that were enacted in several countries. Mexico began to promote capital intensive agricultural production in the 1970s when Pemex, the national oil company, developed petrochemical production. The government then promoted the use of pesticides, fertilizers, and herbicides by offering low interest credit to *campesinos*. It took more than two decades for the small plot cultivators to realize the long term destruction to soils and the environment caused by chemical fertilizers. By that time the balanced traditional rural subsistence cultivation and artisan production was upset, and self-sufficiency in food production of Third World countries was seriously undermined.

It was also during the 1960s that the era of globalization was fueled by OPEC control over oil supplies and increase in energy costs. A dual discourse about development was initiated, with conservationists warning the major consumers of energy that sources of nonrenewable resources were limited, while financial advisers promoted direct export investment. The rapid movement of goods and people around the globe intensified as investors sought low-wage producers in countries with low tax rates and no environmental protection laws. Ecological issues became part of the discourse, if not the practice, of governments that still thought in terms of national advantages rather than global urgency. In subsequent decades two measurements (direct foreign investment and the terms of trade between core centers and the periphery) that were devised to show global integration also showed the deterioration of Third World economies. The former, that is direct foreign investments from core developed economies, were increasing exponentially, while the latter, that is terms of trade, were declining in Third World countries for the primary products they sold on the world market. For women who were trying to

feed their families on the diminishing cash returns for their surpluses, the impact became a matter of life and death.

Theodore Schultz (1964) was one of the few mainstream dissidents in economics to challenge development from above and to reevaluate semisubsistence household production. Drawing from Sol Tax's (1950) careful demonstration of the rational allocation of productive efforts by Guatemalan indigenous farmers in his book, *PENNY CAPITALISM*, Schultz (1964) advocated their incorporation into modernization programs on their own terms. His stress on the need for a dialogue with the population being developed was ignored because of priorities that promoted U.S. enterprises in the world market. I recall one U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) official who was fired from his job in Guatemala in the 1960s when he succeeded in developing a native grain that substituted for the costly American grains required for highly bred pigs.

Despite the caveats of these far-sighted development critics, direct foreign investments (DFI) in highly capitalized enterprises such as hydroelectric dams and super highways multiplied exponentially as OPEC dollars washed up on the shores of developed capitalist centers. In contrast to earlier development cycles, accumulation of capital increasingly derived from this low-wage sector in assembly operations. Since women constituted a major proportion of the labor force drawn in to these operations, feminist scholarship became crucial in understanding the new arenas of capital accumulation. I will say more of that below.

### **Failure of Trickle Down Effect and the Critique of Development in the 1970s and 1980s**

The development euphoria of the 1960s began to fade in the following decades as the assumptions based on the trickle

down effect of capitalist accumulation proved inadequate to explain the persistent impoverishment of much of the population in countries that were experiencing "development" as measured by the GNP. This led to the second phase of development theory and practice in the 1970s that began with the growing problems in those countries targeted for development and surged with the feminist critique of development studies.

Ever more sophisticated rationales of the same inadequate data base held that a highly unequal income distribution is necessary to facilitate investment. Economic development "experts," who consistently left women and their domestic concerns out of the picture, advocated a big push with high capitalist investments in modernizing sectors to ignite backward sectors of the economy. Despite their advantageous position in seeing how development projects affected local economies, anthropologists were on the low end of the development expertise hierarchy in academic as well as United Nations circles, perhaps because they harped on the inadvertent consequences of development for the people who were being developed. I remember back in 1971 when I served on the Social Science Research Council's (SSRC) Committee on Latin America I was shocked to find myself the lone woman in a session for planning long-range research guidelines. In our opening meeting, I attacked the entire spectrum of social science models, including Marxism, dependency theory, modernity theory and developmentalism for their failure to include women's perspectives in their schema. Not a single response came from the thirty or more men assembled in the meeting room of the hotel in Barbados.<sup>2</sup> In a subsequent grant proposal session, I felt completely alone in trying to block funding for a study of the economic feasibility for shipping polluting branches of the steel industry abroad, holding that the industry was just seeking legitimization of the project and therefore ought to fund it themselves. Albert Hirschman, who served as director of the research committee at the time, questioned why I was wasting

the committee's time holding out against such a modest proposal of only five thousand dollars. He later wrote a book extolling the virtues of high investment projects since the very expenditure of capital ensured continuity of projects that bore high risks (Hirschman 1967).

Frustrated with the lack of collegial support, I drafted a proposal for the SSRC to fund a conference on feminine perspectives. With a grant of \$27,000, I worked with Helen Safa and Elsa Chaney to contact researchers for the first conference on Latin American gender issues. We intended to hold the conference in Santiago, Chile in 1973, but the Pinochet coup intervened and made critical discourse of any kind impossible. Finally the diTello Center in Buenos Aires agreed to sponsor the program which was held in February 1974. The eighteen scholars, including two men, presented papers in which some attacked stereotypes of women's passivity in the development sphere; others presented ethnographic cases showing women's real contribution to the economy that was left out of GNP; and still others derided religious and political archetypes that denied a place for women in public life. Many of the participants have become leading contributors advancing scholarship on women in subsequent decades, providing the basis for the observations I summarize below.

In the 1970s it took the persistence of a detective agent to elicit the contributions of women in most Latin American countries. There were almost no national data bases that included gender breakdowns. In the following decade, female contributions to national economies were assessed in careful political economic studies by Deere and Leon de Leal (1981) in Colombia, Aguiar (1986) and Saffioti (1978, 1986) in Brazil, Arizpe (1977) and Beneria and Sen (1981) in Mexico, Bourque and Warren in Peru (1981), Safa (1986) in Puerto Rico. Safa (1981), Fernandez-Kelly (1983), and Nash and Fernandez-Kelly (1983) provided further cases on export processing sites throughout the world. By elaborating ethnographic observations of

women's work, these studies exposed the specious argument that the value added by women's work could not be measured.

Some women working within the World Bank and U.S. AID projects pioneered advocacy approaches for women and development. Mary Elmendorf was one of the advocates who carved out a niche in the World Bank for projects targeting three basic needs: population, energy, and water (Elmendorf 1977). She conveyed the lessons of her ethnographic experience in the Yucatan, recognizing the crucial role of women to development agents. Elsa Chaney expanded her ethnographic investigations with Ximena Bunster (Bunster and Chaney 1985) to work with unions of servants who were largely ignored by trade union organizations. Her success in mobilizing women whose work had been invisible in policy circles forged a new anthropological method of "participatory ethnography."

Feminist research proceeded to destroy the assumptions that income was shared equally among members of the household. It proved as illusory as the assumption that a rise in the GNP would benefit all families, leading to new policies of credit and family assistance in international agencies. The failure of development agencies to explain or mitigate persistent poverty was shown to result from their failure to take women into account in providing access to education or to credit and other resources made available to men in developing countries. In 1978 Neuma Aguiar organized a conference in Rio de Janeiro on women in the labor force and the problem of assessing the contribution of women to development. Many of the papers presented at that meeting demonstrated the failure of censuses in all Latin American countries to assess women's contribution to GNP and to household welfare. Aguiar (1986) argued that women's economic activities are underestimated first because of patriarchal premises that attribute the product of joint male and female activities to the male, and second because women are principally employed in non-capitalist institutions.

She concluded that, as a result, national and international change agents consistently failed to promote development projects that would improve the life chances of women and children. Some attacked the assumption that the "head of the family," always considered to be the man, would turn over his paycheck to his wife who was presumably sitting at home doing nothing on her own to maintain the family.

In the new regime of capital accumulation related to increasing direct foreign investment, women were the principal sector drawn in to the global work force to produce the surplus value expanding profits. This was realized directly in assembly line productions (Safa 1982, Fernandez Kelly 1983, Nash and Fernandez Kelly 1983), or it was realized in the informal economy where women maintained low subsistence costs for workers in supplying fresh produce, meats and fish while earning remarkably low profit margins. "From fields to cooking pots," was the political slogan that Florence Babb (1989) found in Lima's urban markets, providing the key for understanding women's contribution to global exchange.

Feminist scholarship in these first two decades enhanced our awareness of women's economic contributions and rewards, establishing them as a target sector in development planning. Feminist critiques promoted some advances in United Nations census-gathering techniques. The Gini index and the Morris Physical Quality of Life Index that takes into account life expectancy, infant mortality and literacy were introduced in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These tools enabled policymakers to assess who was getting the bigger share of the pie at home and in the world market and how it could best be distributed for the common welfare. This became ever more pressing in the subsequent debt crisis as the errors of past development processes began to devastate Third World economies.

## The Debt Crisis and Women's Roles in Survival Economics

During this second phase of development policies, in the 1980s, the contradictions inherent in the emergent global economy reached crisis proportions. The costs of social reproduction were shifted from state welfare agencies and private enterprises to the households themselves. In response to these additional pressures, two patterns emerged. Women became the targeted labor force in development programs based on assembly plant industrialization and, out of the same urgent necessity to maintain their families, women invented a whole new economy as petty sellers and market vendors in what came to be called the informal economy. As the most intensively exploited part of the global work force, women provided the basis for primitive capitalist accumulation. As maquila workers in assembly production they enabled the newly industrializing countries to attract investments, and as cultivators and market sellers, they subsidized biological reproduction during the Latin American debt crisis. Their voices began to be heard for the first time as anthropologists and sociologists perceived the quiet revolution going on (Babb 1989; Bunster and Chaney 1985; Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Deere and Leon de Leal 1981; Lim 1986; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Safa 1981). Mariarosa Dalla Costa developed an argument that even the most orthodox Marxists were able to appreciate, noting that women's unpaid labor in the household lowered the costs of producing a labor force and hence qualified as exploited labor in the class struggle. Picking up on this point, feminist sociologist Morris Blackman told Brazilian aid technicians that they could raise the GNP of Brazil by a simple method: take women's domestic labor into account.

Jamaica was the first country hit by development gone awry and the conditions set by the IMF for repayment of the country's debt that skyrocketed during the "decade of miracle growth" in the 1960s. Lynn Bolles was carrying out fieldwork

in the 1970s when the crisis hit Jamaica. She analyzes (Bolles 1986) the crunch between industrial production and social reproduction, as women who had become dependent on wage work in assembly factories lost their jobs. Investors in foot-loose export processing firms that had been attracted by low wages and taxes, withdrew their capital because of inflation and fear of worker takeovers during Michael Manley's term of office as a socialist prime minister. The IMF proceeded to devalue the currency, reduce import conditions, and set controls on credit. Women's recourse to the informal economy in the face of violent fluctuations in the export sector became a repeated pattern in the 1980s as economies collapsed in the face of indebtedness and violent fluctuations in the circulation of money. Faye Harrison (1988, 1997) also published on Jamaica's urban informal economy and on the effects of structural adjustment on everyday life during that period, and into the 1980s and early 1990s.

As market vendors or producers in the informal economy, women provide at low cost the basic foods, clothing and medicines for the urban barrios of Latin American cities. In her careful ethnography of market women during the political and economic crisis of the 1980s in Lima, Peru, Florence Babb (1989: 2) described: "picture card figures with full skirts, broad-rimmed hats, and long braids, who in fact underwrite the Peruvian national economy." What Babb and other ethnographers were discovering was the new informal economy generated by the crises of the 1970s and 1980s that sustained the societies and economies in the traumatic adjustment and reconstruction caused by development policies themselves. Cultivators and pastoralists pushed out of the rural economy, were flocking to the cities where the women brought their domestic activities into the market sphere. Processing and cooking foods, knitting and weaving clothing and tourist novelties, women found in petty selling and marketing the kind of flexible schedules and arenas where children were tolerated that were ex-

cluded in domestic service that was once their unique way of earning a living (Babb 1989, Buechler 1986, Jelin 1977, Arizpe 1977). Some women in the Andes managed the crisis by turning their domestic pursuits into public enterprises, opening up collective kitchens and badgering government officials to provide basic water and health services. I was visiting one of these kitchens high up in the *barriadas* of Lima, chatting with the women and marveling over what they had accomplished in feeding hundreds of people daily, when the conversation suddenly stopped. The women later told me that one of the members of *Senderos Luminosos* had passed near the kitchen, and it was only a short time before that they had killed one of the leading women in the collective kitchens movement. Both populist and Maoist political movements realized the popularity of these survival practices and were either trying to capture their political potential or to eliminate the leaders (Blondet 1988). As the women developed these self-help programs, they were overcoming the dependency at home and in public spheres that had crippled their autonomy in the past (Nash 1977).

It took more than a decade for the informal economy to be admitted into development studies and become validated for funding. In the decade of the 1990s international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially those organized by feminists appealing to humanitarian funding institutions, opened up spaces for the new cohort of female waged workers and those functioning in the informal economy to speak out. As anthropologists and sociologists amplified the voices of these Third World women, advocates for alternative development processes began to listen, and some of their work even became incorporated into mainstream economists.

What these scholars were making clear was that investment capital in Third World countries did not come from foreign capital alone but was also derived from work in the domestic or informal economy where women maintained low subsis-

tence costs for the work force. The accumulation process based on women's invisible labor was accelerated when direct foreign investment in assembly operations employing young women expanded in the 1970s and 1980s. It took more than a decade for the informal economy to be admitted into development studies and to become validated for funding projects. By the 1990s, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially those organized by feminists appealing to humanitarian funding institutions, opened up spaces for the new cohort of female waged workers and those functioning in the informal economy to speak out. As anthropologists and sociologists amplified the voices of these Third World women, advocates for alternative development processes began to listen, and some of their work even became incorporated into mainstream economics.

Despite evidence showing the deteriorating local economy, neoliberal policies grew more formidable in the decade of crisis in the 1980s and were not even scuttled when entire countries, such as Bolivia, went into bankruptcy. I was in Bolivia in 1985 when Jeffrey Sachs arrived from Harvard as the boy wonder advocating International Monetary Fund conditions for repayment of the debt run up by the military under Hugo Banzer in the 1970s. It was the first country (following Jamaica) to be hard-hit by restructuring, and the consequences were immediate and far-reaching. Victor Paz Estenssoro, the President who had nationalized the tin mines in 1952 and brought land reform to the countryside, was reelected that summer and quickly responded to IMF conditions for a loan by privatizing the mines. I was living with a family of miners when they voted for "*el chivo*" (the goat, a term of affection but also recognition of the man's foibles) because they gave him credit for the construction of low-cost individual homes that miners could buy.

Populist leaders who had survived the vicissitudes of the revolutions of the 1950s and 1960s, like Paz Estenssoro, were called in to carry out the "reconstruction" of countries hit by

the financial disorder of the 1980s in Latin America. The ignominy of Paz Estenssoro ending his long political career in service to the neoliberal economy struck me even more cruelly when I returned the following year in July, 1986. Paz Estenssoro had proceeded to reverse those populist victories by privatizing the nationalized mines and firing the union workers that had brought him to the presidency with the victory of the 1952 Bolivian Revolution. I remember walking with laid off miners and members of the housewives association in the 1986 March for Peace and Life with the intent of persuading Paz Estenssoro to keep the mines open. During the stopovers in peasant communities on the 170 km route, nuns and lay sisters attended the marchers, giving food and medical care. As I watched them wash the feet of the marchers as they arrived in each way station with blisters, thoughts of the moral economy still espoused by the church now made more sense than ever. At our last stopover in Calamarca, Paz Estenssoro sent out a heavily armed regiment to surround the marchers and prevent them from completing the 25 km to La Paz where the marchers expected to reach the following day. Women from the mining community, one of whom was my *comadre*, stood at the edge of a Bolivian flag laid out on the highway before the line of soldiers with M1 rifles issued by the U.S. government. Young men and women joined them, and as the sun rose they sang songs and played their guitars. The confrontation ended in the late afternoon. The miners returned to their encampment when the army brought in public busses rather than army vehicles to conduct them back to their communities late in the afternoon. Some chose to go down into the mineshafts that were already filled with poisonous vapors that accumulate when the ventilators are not in operation. Others began hunger strikes in the church, radio station, and union hall. The closing of the mines spelled the end of a way of life, and many wanted to end their lives.

The following year I visited the great mining center of Siglo XX to find a nearly devastated community. Mothers and their

children left behind by men who had migrated to the recently opened iron mines in Brazil or to Argentina were begging in the streets of the miners' compound. I shall never forget the day I visited a parish where a foreign priest was presenting a homily to a crowd of about fifty women with their children, waiting for the distribution of milk and food. The priest asked the women to consider the nucleus of the Christian family and what it comprised. When there was little response except for the crying infants and children, he enlightened the mothers, saying: "It is based on the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost!" One young woman with a baby on her back broke in at that moment: "Excuse me, Padre, it is hard for us to attend to this while our children are crying of hunger."

The attack on the domestic economy carried out in the name of neoliberalism persisted as other Latin American countries were hit by the debt crisis in the mid 1980s (Nash 1990). Carlos Salinas de Gortari served a similar role in Mexico to that of Paz Estenssoro in Bolivia following his election in 1988. He opened up *ejido* communal plots to private enterprises in 1992, effectively ending the Agrarian Reform Act that was the principle achievement of the 1910-17 Revolution, and signed into law the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that was to go into effect in 1994. Both these acts precipitated the Zapatista uprising. Priests and even some bishops who began to espouse the cause of those struggling for survival were responding to the crisis with intervention measures through Caridad, but politicians persisted on a collision course with peasants, industrial workers, and increasingly indigenous peoples.

## **Endogenous Development with Women as Leaders in the New Revolution**

We are now in the third phase of what seemed to be the inexorable advance of predatory capitalist expansion. This was initiated when cracks in the global system began to show in the 1980s with whole nations going into bankruptcy. Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank that were fashioned at Bretton Woods to balance the competing demands of nations in the world arena were called upon to play the role of bailing out multinational firms and the politicians that served them. The burden of payment for the debt incurred was cast on peasants, workers, housewives and their families in the underdeveloped areas of the world through currency depreciation and debased terms of exchange for their primary products. The new frontiers of capital advance in tropical forest areas that for centuries have been exploited sporadically for rubber, chicle, minerals (including gold, wood, and exotic resources of the fauna and flora) are now claimed by cattle ranchers, oil explorers, and genetic biodiversity engineers.

This advance differs from past incursions not because the predators ignore the prior rights of hunters and gatherers who had preserved the forest as a habitat, but because they are now threatening the habitat itself. In the 1980s cattle ranchers burned much of the Amazonian forest cover, and herded the inhabitants into reservations far from their traditional homes. This incursion, vividly described by Simonian in her thesis (1993), disrupted the population of entire villages who were packed into non-pressurized cargo planes and dumped into remote parts of the forest where many died from the consequences of the traumatic trip or from their lack of familiarity in strange territory. Jungles are now crisscrossed with paved roads to facilitate the passage of oil drilling machines and armies that accompany them. Birds and beasts are commodities valued

for their feathers and fur but not their presence in the world, and the settlements that grew up along the highways bear the names of extinct populations that once lived there.

At the turn of the millennium indigenous people are becoming the protagonists of alternative development programs that measure progress in relation to advances in human welfare, and seek collective not individual enrichment. They have emerged from a tumultuous half century, beginning with United Nations declarations on cultural rights and the mobilization for the 1992 Quincentennial Celebration of 500 Years of Conquest in the western hemisphere, that culminated with the charter of the indigenous Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests adopted at the Rio de Janeiro conference on ecology. Along with the NGOs that support the indigenous peoples' right to speak and provide the arenas for their message to be heard, the original people or first nations are providing alternative paths to progress. Their distinctive voices are remarkable for the poetry of their expression and their message of the need for balance in the cosmos and at home. Women have for the first time in modern history emerged as central protagonists defining the values of indigenous people in national and hemispheric congresses. At the Beijing Women's Tribunal in 1995 indigenous women defined their relation to global change in these terms:

The Earth is our Mother: From her we get our life, and our ability to live. It is our responsibility to care for our Mother and in caring for our Mother, we care for ourselves. Women, all females, are manifestations of Mother Earth in human form (LaDuke 1996: 7).

This inspired what some of my colleagues consider an essentializing piece of rhetoric when I was writing my book, *MAYAN VISIONS: THE QUEST FOR AUTONOMY IN AN AGE OF GLOBALIZATION*:

Women, as caretakers for young and old, are central actors in the emergent social movements of indigenous peoples precisely because of their connectedness to the issues of the survival of past traditions and future generations in their own lives. The concurrent rise of women's stature in global settings with their subordination in patriarchal families and communities has intensified gender conflict. The call for action expressed in the United Nations Convention in Geneva in 1993 and the resolution in 1995 to give further protection and promote the dignity and human rights of women and girls provide the direction for changing gender relations. So long as women lack a voice in public arenas, their particular concerns in survival and care for dependents will be ignored or marginalized (Nash 2001: 25).

Rereading this, I cannot disclaim the essentialist formulation of the problem, nor would I want to since it stems directly from women's experience. As I had discovered in my own experience in becoming aware of women's exclusion from social science planning sessions, my own self-awareness was the beginning of consciousness as a class of differentially treated people. Third World women are beginning to arrive at a distinct awareness of their problems, one that sees their sex as fundamentally committed to survival and regeneration of their traditional culture. For hundreds of years after the conquest of indigenous peoples of the western hemisphere, women have withdrawn, and sometimes been forced to withdraw, from the central arenas of public life. Indigenous men who were forced to undertake wage labor in distant plantations or fight in wars not of their own making, often made a collective decision that women should take primary responsibility for the protection of their culture and traditions. Now that indigenous people foresee the imminent destruction of these retreats, it is the women who take the lead in challenging the right of the invaders to dominate. I have seen the colonizers of Patiwitz in the Lacandón rainforest refuse much needed gifts of food of-

ferred by the army as appeasement on Mother's Day, four months after their invasion. I have also seen videos of women pushing soldiers out of their towns and linking their arms with other women to prevent tanks from rolling into their villages. It takes courage to reject these young soldiers cut off from their own families and communities and trying to find their manhood by brandishing powerful automatic rifles, especially on the day that Mexicans nearly sanctify motherhood. By taking a stand against the quintessentially male military institution in their midst, and by rejecting the gifts of food and medicine thrown at them by government agents, women are resisting the government co-optation that has demoralized the *caciques* (indigenous leaders) in traditional communities.

Yet in the post-modern, deconstructive mode now fashionable in anthropology, the very category of women is decried as essentialist.<sup>3</sup> This reductionist view of Third World women, as people with "'needs' and 'problems' but no freedom to act" (Chandra Mohanty, cited in Escobar 1995: 8) certainly merits criticism, but the critique should not end with this. Edward Said's (1978) barbed attack on the orientaling tendencies noted in the Europeans' categorization of the East as they reduced its complexity to an essentialized category has transmuted into a deconstruction of indigenous peoples' attempts to present a common front in their resistance movements. We must go beyond deconstruction of the rhetoric to discover the structural factors deriving from neoliberal policies that reduce social welfare and expand military budgets. The task then is to discover and act on the alternatives posed by indigenous people themselves.

## **Autonomous Development as an Alternative to Neoliberalism**

We men and women, united and free, are aware that the war we declare is an extreme but just act. The dictators are applying an undeclared genocidal war against our pueblos for many years, for which we ask your determined participation in support of this plan of the Mexican pueblo that is fighting for work, land, shelter, food, health, education, independence, liberty, democracy, justice and peace. We declare that we will not stop fighting until we succeed in fulfilling these basic demands of our pueblo, forming a government of our free and democratic country.

Flier distributed by the  
Zapatista Army of National Liberation  
on New Year's Eve, 1994

On New Year's Eve 1994, a clandestine group of indigenous men and women seized the town offices of four cities in Chiapas, Mexico, and declared an end to their marginalization by the Mexican government. It was the eve of the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement that opened the Mexican market to imports from abroad and spelled an official end to government support for small plot cultivators. In their statement of ten basic demands (roofs over our heads, food, education, medical services, justice, the right to vote, independence, peace or justice, etc.), the group that became known as the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) had not yet formulated the underlying roots of their uprising. This was the desire for autonomy in cultural expressions, governance, and the management of their economic programs. Of the 15,000 soldiers in the EZLN, 40% are women. As the movement spread to the highland communities of Chiapas and lit a spark among indigenous people of Guerrero, Oaxaca, and the other states with large indigenous populations in Mexico, the demand for autonomy subsumed all the other basic needs neglected by the nation.

The meaning of autonomy in Zapatista communities goes beyond the meaning of liberty or autonomy in western society. It does not mean to be free of any constraints by the society in which one is embedded, but to accept the collective will as one's own following intensive discussion in autonomous councils. Nor does it mean unlimited privileges, but rather to earn the rights of belonging through responsible participation. The demand for autonomy became ever more prominent in the conventions and congresses mobilized by the EZLN in the years right after the uprising. The demand was congruent with a growing awareness as to who or what was their nemesis. A flier distributed at the 1996 Intercontinental Encounter Against Neoliberalism and for Humanity sums it up in the phrase: "Neoliberalism Spells Death for Everyone!" In her welcoming speech to participants who came from all over the world, Commander Ana Maria spoke at the encounter in these words:

As for the power, known worldwide as "*neoliberalism*," we do not count, we do not produce, we do not buy, we do not sell. We are useless in the accounts of big capital. And so we went to the mountain to seek relief from our pain at being forgotten stones and plants. Here in the mountains of southeast Mexico our dead live. Our dead who live in the mountains know many things. They speak to us of their death and we listen. The talking boxes told us another history that comes from yesterday and aims at tomorrow. The mountain spoke to us, the *macehualob* who are common and ordinary people. (Author's translation of speech delivered in Oventic [Nash 2001: 224].)

Ana Maria captures the inner reality of being part of "simple reproduction" of non-capitalist society coexisting with "expanded reproduction" that was central to Rosa Luxemburg's critique of capitalism in the early 20th century. Some contemporary critics<sup>4</sup> are rereading Luxemburg and Lenin in search of an answer for the question raised by Marx as to why capitalist nations must look beyond national borders to maintain

or raise profits. A superficial reading is that by drawing new consumers into the trading nexus, the crisis of overproduction of goods caused by the underconsumption by low paid workers is solved. But Luxemburg went beyond her contemporaries to show that capitalism had "to undermine the independence of social units that she called the 'natural economy' in order to gain possession of their means of production and labour power and to convert them into commodity buyers." This method of gaining compliance to the new system, she goes on to say, "is invariably accompanied by a growing military, whose importance will be demonstrated below" (Luxemburg 1971: 92). She predicted that if capitalism were to succeed in this (that is, undermining the independent subsistence sector) they would bring about their own demise.

Ana Maria reflects Luxemburg's premises about the relentless drive for new markets by capitalist producers when she states that the Zapatistas are of little account in the new economy developing in Mexico and in the world because they neither sell their labor or their products, nor do they buy from the world market. In order to break down that independence, the nation must deprive them of the land that they have settled, particularly since an ocean of oil has been discovered beneath the forest cover in the Lacandón. Luxemburg's prediction that it will require military force to break the independence of people in the "natural economy" is being fulfilled: on February 9, 1995 President Zedillo ordered the invasion of 60,000 federal troops into the Lacandón rain forest in the heartland of Zapatista territory. The Zapatistas had not violated the terms of the cease fire agreed upon shortly after the uprising. Their fault was to insist on the autonomy that has inspired the 500 years of resistance of many indigenous people throughout the hemisphere, as well as a share of the resources found in their territories.<sup>5</sup>

Civil society in Mexico has mobilized strong protests against the militarization of the Lacandón, rallying repeatedly in

Mexico City's *zocalo* and joining peace brigades to ensure the safety of the Zapatistas in the Lacandón. Peace activists sent busloads of food and medicines to the conflict area, even though the army often confiscated these supplies. Mexican peace supporters were joined by delegations of human rights activists from many Latin American countries, Europe, Canada, and the United States that conducted tours of the conflict area and protested the violations they observed. The growing pressure forced the government to concede to the Zapatista demand for autonomy in the regions where indigenous people were a majority, and President Zedillo signed the San Andrés Accord on February 16, 1996. It has never been enacted, and 60,000 armed forces remain quartered in the jungle. Nonetheless indigenous communities are engaged in the practice of autonomy in the regions they control, and they are seeking the institutional bases to ensure the economic and political base for their distinct culture. They are now confronting a major threat in the form of a development project, Plan Puebla Panama, that might end their control over their dwindling land base, as I discuss below.

### **Plan Puebla Panama and the Invasion of Oaxaca/Lacandón Jungles**

During his first year in office, Vicente Fox's government launched a major hemispheric development scheme, called Plan Puebla Panama, designed to promote modernity in the southern sector of Mexico and Central America. It projects a new vision of Mexico's place in the hemisphere by directing attention to the southern border with its Central American neighbors and away from the increasingly menacing northern border. Unlike earlier development programs, Plan Pueblo Panama is much more forthright in pointing to the dangers of the growing inequality between rich and poor in the area. Rec-

ognizing the growing wealth gap between the southern states and those of the central plateau and north, the Plan intends to address the human needs of the people in the macro-region of southern Mexico and Central America and specifically to promote development in indigenous communities of the southern states of Mexico, in a fight against poverty (Plan Puebla Panama 2001: 3). The scheme would promote education, the integration of sectors in the basic infrastructure of the state, and the growth of productive activities. Sustainable growth and protection of the environment are the key elements in the new development plans, terms learned from the critique by NGOs of past development. Assets are the abundant labor supply available at "competitive costs in the global level," a privileged geographic position, political democracy and commercial agreements already in place. The plan refers to the abundant natural resources, tourist attractions, and "biological richness" available. Infrastructural construction of roads and improvement of port facilities on both the Gulf and the Pacific coast are highlighted.

The Plan touches on all the buzzwords of the new development perspectives: the objectives of human and social advancement, the participation of society in planning, structural change to promote equality, productive careers and investments, sustainable growth, and environmental responsibility, occasionally slipping into retro terms like "institutional modernization." The Plan uses the rhetoric of consulting the *pueblo* but does nothing to address the mechanisms for implementing the San Andrés accords as an institutional base for achieving a changed relation with the state. The "wealth of traditions" and "rich multiculturalism" promise to contribute to a lucrative tourist industry, but little is said of the conflicts that must be solved for this to be realized in a cooperative venture in which the carriers of the culture benefit from their own commercialization.

The advantages of the Plan lie in its turn away from centralization of government attention in the Federal District and the northern border with the U.S., and promotion of growth in the most backward sectors of the republic. Recognizing that this area demonstrates the growing wealth gap deriving from past development processes, the Plan promises to bring it up to the level of development of the rest of the nation. By reaching out to its southern neighbors and engaging in trade and development projects with the Central American market it has the possibility of lessening the dependent relations with the United States. Indeed, the "privileged" geographic position of the region, located midway between the three great commercial blocks of North America, Europe, and Asia, Mexico could be in a position to deal directly with new trading partners in Europe and Asia.

Yet the Plan, now being discussed in Zapatista circles, denies the central concerns of this new revolutionary movement. Zapatistas have called for endogenous development for the advance of human subjects who are agents of their own enterprises. The ultimate objectives of the Plan, however, are the promotion of direct foreign investment in enterprises exploiting the rich resources of the region including oil, hydroelectric power, "biodiversity" of fauna and flora (including the multicultural population as tourist attractions). The planners intend to facilitate trade and commerce to distant markets of North America, Europe, and Central America. In their statement (Plan Puebla Panama 2001) the government planners devote pages to the improvement of roads, communication and port facilities, encompassing the highway, rail and canal developments already undertaken that will parallel the Panama Canal through the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Yet nothing is said of the institutional means to draw indigenous people into the planning process.

The Plan Puebla Panama is not without its critics in Mexico, and it is refreshing to see that their remarks are incorporated

in the publications of the Plan. In a critical addendum to the published plan, Carlos Fazio points out that it is a plan developed "by a government of entrepreneurs for the entrepreneurs," and that the Mexican government is prepared to grant legality and security for private investments, both national and foreign (Plan Puebla Panama 2001). He finds it ominous that there will be no restriction on remissions of profits to the country of origin of capital. The validity of his criticism is clear if we keep in mind that the miracle of the Asian Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs) was achieved by governments carrying out precisely those restrictions that are considered anathema to IMF or neoliberal trading agreements. Based on the history of foreign capital investments on the northern border, some critics fear that Fox's commitments to foreign companies will extend to labor practices, fiscal regulations and environmental considerations, allowing foreign investors to take advantage of a cheap labor force, polluting practices, and health and safety requirements.

Even more significant is the opposition mounting in the region against the Plan. In four of the eight countries in the Plan Puebla Panama area (Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama) coalitions have formed to resist the Plan. Civil society organizations have formed conferences "in search of a plural, full, and democratic multisectorial space" where the people can formulate alternatives. (Marco [Fonseca@utoronto.ca](mailto:Fonseca@utoronto.ca), e-mail to Marc Edelman, transmitted to author). The coordination of organizations throughout the Central American region may portend a transnational organization uniting peasant sectors along lines Marc Edelman (2001) has demonstrated.

The "new empire" that Fazio (Plan Puebla Panama 2001) and others criticize in Plan Puebla Panama is based on a model of exogenous capitalist accumulation. The reinvigorated formula for the concentration of wealth is one in which the titular leaders of "client states," preferably elected by democratic

voting procedures to satisfy international human rights observers, will yield strategic sectors of its economy to foreign investors in the extraction of oil and lumber or in assembly production, with a trickle down going to local elites. The new imperialism differs from empires of the 19th century in that there are no sectors of the domestic economy in which capitalist transactions are forbidden. The British established reserves in their African colonies where women and children maintained small plots for food production for themselves, and where aging workers withdrew when they could no longer serve in the mines and commercial ventures. The Dutch promoted a "culture system" that maintained a subsistence sector of cultivators that could sustain the population when the prices for primary products broke down and where workers in the commercialized sector could withdraw when they were laid off. The current Thai king draws on the historical precedents in a country that had never succumbed to imperialism because the monarchy ensured rice cultivation for its subjects.

In contrast, neoliberal regimes offer no safety nets for semi-subsistence cultivators drawn into global markets. After years of belt-tightening in the 1980s, and violently fluctuating returns for the cash crops that governments encouraged *campesinos* to raise only to abandon them when the market collapsed on the world stock exchange, the domestic economy of rural Chiapas is in tatters. Women are suspicious of a plan that talks about invigorating the local economy but intends to send off the men to distant areas where they work on constructing the infrastructure for bigger and more costly enterprises. They have heard bulletins about the existing assembly plants in Central America, and are not enthusiastic about having their "underutilized labor" allocated to working 10 to 12 hours a day with no time left to tend their families. *Campesinos* of Oaxaca are concerned that their lands will be seized by eminent domain and that the archeological zone will be affected. The highway between Mitla and Oaxaca runs through the sa-

cred Zapotec valley that may have generated the religious discourse that was the founding nucleus of Mesoamerican civilization. As they see it, these new enterprises are shredding the fabric of society.

Some of these misgivings were expressed in a meeting held in Tapachula, Chiapas on May, 12, 2001. Attended by NGOs, grassroots organizations, cooperatives, church groups, and women's organizations, those who attended the meeting called for representation from below and expressed their reservations about the outcome in polarization and exclusion that would violate the sovereignty of the *pueblos* of the Central American Isthmus. In their demands the group called for a moratorium on the "bioprospectors" and the import of genetically altered foods. In the spring of 2002 the restriction on immigration on the southern border, heralded as a key element in the government's control of the area, began. Dozens of Chiapas *campesinos* were apprehended as illegal Guatemalan or Central American immigrants.

Based on past experience in the Grijalva River dam project, where cultivable lands were seized from *campesinos* with little compensation, the indigenous people object to the megaprojects that are imposed on them without their consent. The Angostura dam construction in the township of Venustiano Carranza is a case in point: built in the years from 1969 to 1974, the dam flooded over 5,000 hectares of rich arable land for which *campesinos* of the area have not yet been fully compensated. When communal lands are restituted on the basis of claims for usurped communal lands, the PRI government frequently returned the land to *campesinos* whose claims were contested by other groups. This stirs up endogenous conflicts, justifying the government sending in troops and further repressing indigenous people.

In the present contest for control over the Lacondón forest, the struggle for land now pits Zapatista rebels against ecologists (Tim Weiner, *The New York Times* December 8, 2002).

Rebels blame the devastating fires in the spring of 1998 as attempts by the army to clear the forest and allow unimpeded views of their settlements and the facilitation of the movement of armored vehicles, while the army blamed them on the slash and burn cultivation techniques of the colonizers. The fact that in the 30 years of increasing colonization of the jungle there was never such destruction, while major fires continue to plague the area since massive military invasions from 1995 on, is cited by Zapatistas and their supporters to buttress their position. As the reserve areas of biological diversity, the dwindling forests such as the Lacandón are the front lines for the contest over development alternatives.

### **Where Do We Go From Here?**

Because women are the principal labor force for the domestic economy, they have become the principal activists in opposing the current advance of capitalist enterprises in the tropical forest areas of the world. What were once the arenas of class struggle in plantations and factories during the 19th century are now displaced to the homes and communities of impoverished populations of the world. Women have a more poignant sense of the diminishing resources and territorial base since they accept the primary responsibility of sustaining themselves and their families. It is they who have to listen to the children cry. As their children lose their sense of belonging to the world they become prey to drug addiction, prostitution, and paramilitary bands. More than any revolutionaries of the past that drew lines between ethnic, religious, and class groups, women are aware that the enemy lies within these spheres. Their sons and mates rank among those that are unofficial warriors of the new wars provoked by multinational enterprises. Unemployed youths high on drugs and equipped with weapons by the Mexican armed forces were neighbors and

relatives of the victims in the Acteal rampage. When their husbands threaten and beat them if they attend meetings of their cooperatives, as still happens in the Lacandón, and when neighbors and relatives yield to corrupt local officials and carry out massacres against them, as in Acteal where all but nine of the 45 victims were women and children, as well as four fetuses (often uncounted in reports), women realize the need for a new kind revolution that does not use weapons of war or pretend to rally the forces of good against the forces of evil. The Zapatistas use their antiquated firearms and sticks of symbolic reminders that they are prepared to die for their cause. They must fight their own wars against alcoholism and corruption in order to reaffirm the sense of their own cultural roots.

In the colonized areas of the Lacandón rainforest and in the Christian Base Communities of the highlands of Chiapas, women in the Zapatista movement are seeking a new way of relating to their families and communities. In their cooperatives and collective work groups they try to promote egalitarian relations that deny the hierarchical order based on gender and wealth that were their destiny in the plantations from which they come, or the traditional order from which they withdrew when they became committed to liberation theology. In my limited stays in the rainforest I have seen remarkable transformations in gender relations. Men often engage in child care and cooking, just as women participate in public arenas. In their national appearances, the Zapatistas always maintain an equal number of men and women. We observed this as the caravan congregated in the cathedral plaza in February 2001 and found it affirmed in the hearings in the federal congress in March, 2001. The Zapatistas seek ways of overcoming any cult of personality, by featuring new speakers, both women and men. These are the conditions that they want to replicate in any development enterprises, just as they are putting them into practice in their daily lives.

The story I have told about the Chiapas rainforest echoes in other indigenous retreat zones throughout the hemisphere. Government agents and even environmental experts often treat these areas as uninhabited zones to be exploited according to the whim of the administrators. Where oil or minerals have been discovered, existing populations are soon removed by force or persuasion.<sup>6</sup> The projects that pretend to promote sustainable growth areas often fail in the planning stages or are interrupted by contradictory projects that disorient the indigenous populations. This was the case with Plan Pilota Forestal, a "community based silviculture project" initiated by the Mexican-German alliance dedicated to the "Rational Utilization of the Forest" in Quintano Roo, Mexico in 1954. It was also true of the Plan de Acción de la Selva Tropical promoted by the World Bank and the Food and Agricultural Organization for the regrowth of forests (Nigh and Rodríguez 1995: 94-5). And it is an ongoing battle in the Chimalapas rainforest of Oaxaca (Doane n.d.). The only projects that achieve the goal of sustainable regrowth are those that initiate pilot programs and turn them over to local populations that administer the funds made available, such as the Acuerdo Mexicano-Aleman para la Utilización Racional de los Bosques Tropicales (Nigh and Rodríguez 1995: 95). Brazilian and Venezuelan projects that pretended to conserve the ecosystem of jungles from 1987 to 1991, ended up as a typical commercial venture, overcutting the forest and replacing it with fast-growing trees such as eucalyptus that sucks up the moisture and eradicates indigenous plant life in the area. Ronald Nigh and Nemesio Rodríguez (1995: 89-90) summarize the international project, Plan de Acción de la Selva Tropical (PAST) with the cogent statement that:

The overpopulation, the poverty and the destruction of the forests are the result of the same underlying principle: the pyramidal model of growth that favors, at the

expense of inequality in the distribution of riches and the restriction of local participation, predetermined interests, those of large scale industry with an excessive bureaucracy. The history of such development projects originating from outside the target area and promoted by a political and financial elite shows that the ultimate effect is one of environmental destruction and eradication of the indigenous population.

Indigenous people are aware that the only way to break the cycle of poverty induced by development projects planned from above is to create their own opportunities independently of the experts. They are also aware that when development plans are on the agenda, they will succeed only when the entire local population has input into the decisions. As Duncan Earle and Jeanne Simonelli (n.d.) remark on the practices of autonomy in the Lacandón villages in which they did research, the term "self-development" is defined by the Zapatistas as the amount of autonomy social groupings can muster in order to control their lives. This contrasts with development done by others with the attendant threats to their own survival.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The unique advantage of the human species in evolution is the plasticity we have shown in adapting to new conditions in our physical and social environments. We are now on a trajectory that threatens to eliminate the variety of plant and animal species in our biosphere and even alternative responses in our policy making. More concern is expressed in international arenas on the loss of genetic variety in plants and animals than in people. Indigenous peoples still maintain distinct visions of their relation to the cosmos and to other living organisms that promote distinct responses from those advocated by dominant institutions in the global ecumene. They are the best custodi-

ans for the fragile environments that are now being invaded by development agents. Policy makers in the developed countries are still a decade late in responding to the protests from those subjected to development, yet there is a growing theoretical critique of development focused on GNP and profit levels. Significantly, Amartya Sen was named Noble prize winner for his book (1986) on development appraised in a new light: the impact on people, not GNP, and the output on social welfare of the people inhabiting an area, not the infrastructural capacity to transfer the benefits of resources to other countries. Amartya Sen is one of the few development economists of his time to seek a real measure of growth in life expectancy and infant mortality rates. Writing in the 1970s when China represented a Cold War threat instead of a preferred field for investment, Sen pointed out that in 1980 Brazil, with a \$2050 GNP per capita had a life expectancy of 30, China with a \$290 per capita growth rate had a life expectancy of 64, and Sri Lanka with \$270 GNP per capita had a life expectancy of 66. Back then, he called for better measurements and guarantees in entitlements based on the commodity bundles that a person could command in a society. His views of economic development as "a process of expanding the capabilities of people" are beginning to permeate development economics and to change the statistical tools to measure it.

Other contemporaries of Amartya Sen such as Peter Bauer are now positively evaluated by scholars concerned with current trends. The issues of subsistence are now linked in moral commitments to adequate nutrition as never before (Seavoy 2000: viii). Even more significantly, the World Bank, which serves as the fountain of development statistics, is now concerned with evaluating poverty indices more seriously as an indicator of economic stability or disruption. Joseph Stiglitz (2000: viii), Chief Economist of the World Bank, demonstrates the increasing concern with social dislocations caused by impoverishment and emphasizing the need for reducing poverty.

These late millennial reflections on the “external shocks,” financial crises and poverty of what some might consider mainstream economists all seem familiar to me. I had been reading about them three decades earlier in feminist literature on development that documented the fragmentation of the household economy in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Living with the myopic frame of their disciplines, economists saw no evil in the world of direct foreign investments. What Peter Bauer (1981) calls the “disregard of reality” persisted even when the bubble of euphoria burst and workers and peasants (who had lost their own savings) had to assume the burden of speculative debts. This is no longer possible when pickets denounce the disgrace of global inequality in the summit meetings of those who are its gatekeepers.

In the new global regime of accumulation, the moral economy that sustained the minimal guarantees of food sufficiency in 19th century imperialism is discredited as public enterprises that will often maintain employees in cyclical downturns are taken over by “more efficient private producers.” Bolivia was a testing ground to try out the conditions for restructuring a debt-encumbered country in 1985. It was also a testing ground for democracy, since the old model of military regimes put in place by military dictators, as Rios Montt in Guatemala, Hugo Banzer in Bolivia, Pinochet in Chile, were evoking harsh criticism and protest from an increasingly active civil society in Latin America. One model for achieving acceptance of unpopular decrees is that of recycling populist leaders of the past such as Paz Estenssoro who came back from exile to serve the new interests of global capitalism in Bolivia in 1985. Another model is that of the PRI hegemony in Mexico which served the U.S. and other global powers through the waning days of the second millennium. The meltdown of Argentina’s economy, despite the government’s adhering to IMF conditions for debt payment, is emboldening the new populists such as President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and

President Luiz Ignácio da Silva Lula of Brazil to challenge U.S. hegemony in the southern hemisphere.

What seemed irrefutable in mid-20th century is now open to critique. With whole economies going into bankruptcy as a result of neoliberal trading policies, the assumption of progress and even the indices claiming to measure advancement are cast in doubt. Trading in the debts run up in the “periphery” becomes a major part of the exchanges in the “developing countries in the 1980s and 1990s. We are in a phase where the global economy geared to accumulation on a world scale rejects, and most subsistence oriented projects are non-fundable, or non-economic by definition. National economies are urged, or even ordered, to orient their production to export sales (as in Mexico after the debt crisis of 1995), and they respond by dismantling food production systems and turning to export production of coffee that may lead their countries to the brink of starvation when the price for primary commodities declines (as in Nicaragua). Clearly the planners are not thinking of the consumption needs of the people when they measure the success or failure of their projects.

Economists who were once the principal ideologues of development now express misgivings as they reflect that capitalism may have become too successful in absorbing self-reliant agricultural communities. Anthropologists who were early critics of development in the post World War II euphoria are now absorbed in the discourse connecting the diversity of cultures with the apparent monolithic power of globalization. Escobar (1995) and Ferguson (1990) provide devastating critiques of the development discourse, but are less adept in providing us with alternative perspectives. Florence Babb suggests an alternative strategy drawn from her study of predominantly feminine activists in Nicaragua (Babb 2001). These women bring the gendered body as an “originating point of discourse, community, and action” (Babb 2001: 179).

By returning to our ethnographic base we can rediscover the sense of what people who experience the rigors of developmental breakdown are formulating as they fight for survival. Only when we attend to their case can we appreciate how their alternatives might ensure the survival of the human species.

### NOTES

- 1 Among the many critiques of development are those of Arturo Escobar (1995), James Ferguson 1990, Charles P. Oman and Ganeshan Wignaraja (1991) that deal directly with the production of ideology justifying the predominant trends in development practice.
- 2 Many years later Elsa Chaney sent me a note commenting that Robert Myers, then working for the Ford Foundation, said that there was a tempest of memos caused by this first proposal on women and gender to come to the attention of the director.
- 3 Micaela di Leonardo (1985) reviews some of the literature critiquing feminist theory on maternal morality and militarism.
- 4 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) draw on Luxemburg's emphasis on the need for consumers to reinvigorate capitalist enterprises, but miss the persistent tensions between natural and capitalist economy. I have found in Luxemburg's mode of analysis of the "natural economy" a parallel for what Zapatistas express in their commitment to a moral economy. That is the need for an alternative, co-existing but autonomous base of production dedicated to the needs of people rather than the unique drive for profits (Nash 2001: 5-6).
- 5 Few of the Zapatista communities have titles for *ejido* land under the Land Reform Act of the 1917 Constitution. Thus the "Reform" of the Land Reform Act allowing for privatization of existing *ejidos* and declaring an end to further entitlements was a greater threat to them since it ended their hopes for communal control of the lands they colonized. The threat to Mexican *campesinos* evokes the concerns of family farms in Wyoming where the Bush government has discovered that their claims based on the Homestead Act that promoted the westward migration a century ago are in jeopardy since the Act stated only that they had only usufruct rights and no claim to the resources found beneath the soil.

- 6 Colonizers of the Ixcán forest area just across the Mexican Guatemala Border from the Lacandón were massacred in 1974 by the Guatemalan army shortly after oil was discovered (Sinclair 1995).

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