


Aspects for a political epistemology of development: utopia, ideology, neoliberalism and developmentⁱ

Sandro Luiz Bazzanellaⁱⁱ

Contestado University (UnC)

Canoinhas, SC - Brasil

lattes.cnpq.br/8758284212355714


 orcid.org/0000-0002-9430-8684
sandro@unc.br

Cintia Neves Godoiⁱⁱⁱ

Alves Faria University Center (ALFA)

Goiânia, GO - Brasil

lattes.cnpq.br/1888189673541717


 orcid.org/0000-0001-5844-4497
cintia.godoi@unialfa.com.br

Jairo Marchesan^{iv}

Contestado University (UnC)

Concórdia, SC - Brasil

lattes.cnpq.br/0110263539586001


 orcid.org/0000-0001-9346-0185
jairo.marchesan@gmail.com

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Aspects for a political epistemology of development: utopia, ideology, neoliberalism and development

Abstract

This article is the result of research on the political epistemology of development. Its objective is to understand the multiple theoretical and conceptual variables that constitute the terminology of development, from political economy and intertwined with practices and current actions of geopolitical, local and regional nature. The article proposes a debate on the terminology of development based on concepts and conceptions of utopia, ideology and neoliberalism. Its methodology is of bibliographic review, done by consulting, reading and analyzing books and scientific papers presented as relevant references for the debate. The final results of the research point to the ambivalence of discourses on development, which at certain times present themselves as utopia and, at others, as ideology. In both cases, it is essential to recognize the mobilizing force of social expectations inherent to discourses and proposals for development at the local and regional level, especially in the context of current neoliberal ideology.

Keywords: epistemology; utopia; ideology; development; neoliberalism.

Aspectos destacados para uma epistemologia política do desenvolvimento: utopia, ideologia, neoliberalismo e desenvolvimento

Resumo

O presente texto é resultado de pesquisas em torno de uma epistemologia política do desenvolvimento. Seu objetivo é compreender as múltiplas variáveis teóricas e conceituais constitutivas da terminologia desenvolvimento, advindas da economia política e imbricadas em práticas e ações de ordem geopolítica, local e regional na atualidade. O artigo propõe o debate em torno da terminologia desenvolvimento a partir dos conceitos e concepções de utopia, ideologia e neoliberalismo. Tem como metodologia a revisão bibliográfica, realizada a partir da consulta, leitura e análise de livros e artigos científicos que se apresentam como referências relevantes para o debate. Os resultados finais da pesquisa apontam para a ambivalência dos discursos sobre desenvolvimento, que em determinados momentos se apresenta como utopia e, em outros, como ideologia. Em ambos os casos, é imprescindível reconhecer a força mobilizadora das expectativas sociais inerentes aos discursos e propostas de desenvolvimento em âmbito local e regional, sobretudo no contexto da ideologia neoliberal na atualidade.

Palavras-chave: epistemologia; utopia; ideologia; desenvolvimento; neoliberalismo.

1 Introduction

The philosopher and jurist Giorgio Agamben (1942), in the text entitled "What is a people?", present in the work, "Means without: Notes on Politics", translated and published in Brazil in 2015, refers to development as an obsession of our time. More specifically, the philosopher pronounces himself as follows: "The obsession with development is so effective in our time because it coincides with the biopolitical project¹ of producing a people without fractures" (Agamben, 2015, p. 39). In view of this thinker's position, it is necessary to ask ourselves: Why does development present itself as an obsession today? What demands does the obsession with development present for individuals, societies, people and countries? In what way has the obsession with development been affirmed in contemporary times? Is the obsession with development achievable, or just a chimera motivating dreams, expectations and, above all, consuming the vital energy of individuals, societies and people captured by it?

Such questions, among others that could be presented, are urgent, as they require the recognition of fractures, paradoxes, contradictions, and also of the possible potentialities present in discourses on development that are intended to be scientific, political, and social. In other words, in this article we do not offer conclusive answers to the questions presented above, but it is a matter of investigating the epistemological, political and ethical foundations that underlie the "obsession with development" mobilizing areas of scientific knowledge in the constitution of development theories.

¹ The concept of biopolitics is a concept taken up by the French philosopher Michel Foucault in the 1970s, in the context of his genealogical and archaeological research related to the understanding of the techniques of knowledge and power that were institutionally articulated in modernity, conforming a regime of governmentality over the bodies of individuals and the population, conceived as human resources at the disposal of sovereign power, whose modus operandi is guided by the maxim "make live and let die". Thus, the concept of biopolitics designates the fact that in modernity biological life has become the object par excellence of the governmental calculations of State and sovereign power. For his part, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben continues certain aspects that were not sufficiently explored in Foucault's research on the concept of biopolitics. In this direction, Agamben starts from the assumption that all politics in the West has always been presented as biopolitics, as the management of the biological life of individuals and populations taken as human resources at the disposal of the strategic interests of strengthening the sovereign power, which operates in a constant state of exception, producing bare life, disposable life, killable life, according to the cost and benefit calculations articulated by the sovereign power. Still, in this sense, for Giorgio Agamben, the concentration camps present themselves as the paradigm of biopolitical management of life in contemporary times. For further study, we recommend the following reading: MARCHESAN, Jairo; TREML, Krishna Schneider; BAZZANELLA, Sandro Luiz Bazzanella. Biopolitics: development, insecurity, exclusion and violence. (Des)troços: Revista de Pensamento Radical, Belo Horizonte, v. 3, n. 2, p. 142-162, jul./dez. 2022.

Such theories seek to demonstrate, from specific approaches, the supposed dynamics of development achieved by different countries, people, territories, regions and localities in different temporal, political, social and economic contexts. Still in this direction, it is also a matter of considering the propositional force of the obsession with development that feeds the hopes and desires of communities, people and their political leaders, that is, it is a matter of investigating how the idea of the force of development remains active in the political, social and scientific imaginary despite its obsessions, ambivalences and contradictions.

It is under these prerogatives that this article seeks to contribute to the investigations into the constitution of the political epistemology of development, in order to contribute to the understanding of the modern foundations of the obsession with development. In this direction, we start from the observation that the issue of development is circumscribed with social, political, economic and modern scientific demands, more specifically introducing the constitution of political economic sciences. This means that development is constituted as an object in the context of the demands of political economy to understand and guide the initiatives of individual and social organization at the origins of modernity. Such modern demands for social, political and economic organization present ideas, conceptions, discourses and actions, materializing in the utopias of human and social progress.

From the end of the 19th century and throughout much of the 20th century, the utopias of progress, affirmed throughout the 18th century within the Enlightenment movement, presented themselves as ideologies of development. In the last quarter of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century, there seems to be an abandonment of the ideologies of development, especially at the national level, to present itself as a materialization of the neoliberal prescription that, by emptying politics, public space and public goods, as well as individuals, in the form of mere producers and consumers to lead their lives under the imperatives of debit and credit, it pulverized the ideology of development as a local, regional or territorial responsibility. Although, despite the abandonment and fragmentation and now local (regional or territorial) responsibility for development, everything indicates that the "obsession with development" remains active and present in the current imagination of individuals and societies

2 The modern utopia of development

Modernity can be defined from numerous theoretical and conceptual perspectives. Among these definitions is the analytical perspective, which presents modernity as a wage on technical-scientific reason committed to human and social progress. In this sense, the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, in his work "Postmodernity and Its Discontent", defines modernity² as follows: "In fact, modernity can be defined as the epoch, or the lifestyle, in which the placing in order depends on the dismantling of the "traditional" order, inherited and received; in which 'being' means a permanent new beginning" (1998, p. 20). Considering the pertinence and validity of the definitions presented, this investigation seeks to establish a definition anchored specifically in one of the scientific fields inaugurated by modernity – political economy³. "The modern era has witnessed the emergence of a new way of considering the human phenomena and the delimitation of a separate domain that we currently evoke by the words economy, economic" (Dumont, 2000, p. 47). In other words, political economy is born under the modern banner of the search for social, political and economic order, sine qua non conditions for progress.

² However, in his work "Modernity and Ambivalence" (Bauman, 1999, p. 12), Bauman draws attention to the difficulties of defining modernity: "Modernity, like all the other quasi-totalities that we want to remove from the continuous flow of being, becomes elusive: we discover that the concept is loaded with ambiguity, while its referent is opaque in the core and frayed at the edges. In a way that it is unlikely that the argument will be resolved. The defining aspect of modernity underlying these attempts is part of the discussion." Even considering such difficulties in establishing a definition of modernity, the author presents a definition that corroborates the definitions presented above: "Among the multiplicity of impossible tasks that modernity has assigned itself and that have made it what it is, that of order (more precisely and more importantly, that of order as a task) stands out as the least possible of the impossible and the least available of the indispensable – in fact, as the archetype of all other tasks, a task that makes all others mere metaphors of themselves" (Bauman, 1999, p. 12,).

³ The French thinker Pierre Rosanvallon (2002, p. 21), in his work "Economic liberalism: history of the idea of the market", argues that: "The great question of modernity is to think of a secular, disenchanted society, taking up an expression of Max Weber. More precisely; to think of society as self-instituted, without resting on any order external to man. In this sense, Grotius spoke of human establishment, as opposed to a divine establishment." In this context, and under such assumptions, "With Smith, economics presents itself as the solved riddle of all constitutions, to paraphrase Marx's famous expression about democracy. In the heart, and not on the periphery of modern thought, what we can call, following Louis Dumont, economic ideology is born. Economic ideology does not enter modern thought by break-in but asserts itself in its most interior and most necessary movement. Economic ideology, economics as a philosophy, is in fact progressively presented as the concrete solution of the most decisive problems of the 17th and 18th centuries: those of the institution and regulation of the social" (Rosanvallon, 2002, p. 55, our translation).

In the context of scientific research promoted by the various schools of political economy, modernity can be defined as rationality, from which political and economic utopias were elaborated attempting to demonstrate, through fictitious accounts of scientifically governed cities and people, the degree of social organization and progress achieved by such societal experiences. Such a condition was not, in that context, only desirable, but presented itself as the very purpose of modern technical-scientific, political and economic rationality. "The utopian form properly understood belongs entirely to the Modern, although this does not exclude, in any way, that, at certain moments, it is confused with the prophetic dimension itself that may characterize it" (Cacciari, 2016, p. 95).

Modern political and economic utopias emerged and were constituted from the 16th century onwards, in a context of transition from the feudal mode of production to mercantilism, marked by revolutions in agricultural production, with the introduction of new methods of cultivation and the following increase in production; in the intensity and extensiveness of trade; in the increase and resumption of life in the cities; in the demographic increase and its urban demands, educational and sanitary variables, among other variables. A set of revolutions was underway placing at the center of the public square, the primacy of the social and the economy⁴ in relation to politics, that is, politics began to be thought of and conceived as a political economy linked to the expanding productive and social demands.

Modern utopias⁵ are the offspring of revolutions that are established in periods

⁴ Hannah Arendt, in the work "The Human Condition" (1991), situates modernity as an emergence of the social and, with it, of the economy in the state management of the biological life of individuals and populations. "Since the advent of society, since the admission of domestic activities and domestic economy to the public sphere, the new sphere has been characterized mainly by an irresistible tendency to grow, to devour the older spheres of the political and the private, as well as the more recent sphere of intimacy. [...] the private sphere of the family was the plane in which the needs of life, individual survival and the continuity of the species were met and guaranteed" (Arendt, 1991, p. 55, our translation).

⁵ Among the main modern political and economic utopias is "The Utopia, or Treatise on the Best Form of Government" by the English thinker Thomas More (1478-1535). "When he wrote this piece, which was enormously successful in its time, the witch hunt and torture at the stake coexist with bloody punishments inflicted on vagabonds. The rules are reversed in the Republic of Utopia: there it is prescribed not to harm anyone in the name of religion. [...] it is Rafael Hitlodeu, an imaginary character, who More trusts in the exposition of customs and institutions of the utopians. This traveler full of science and experience is, therefore, the main interlocutor of the conversation that constitutes the pretext for the work. But this literary device should not confuse the reader: Raphael is Thomas More's spokesman, and his insistence on describing the benefits of peace and the horrors of war [...]" (Huissman, 2000, p. 562-563, our translation). Francis Bacon (1561-1626) is the author of the utopia entitled:

of crisis and societal transition. Even considering its manifestations in the most distinct times and historical and social contexts, it is in the transition from the medieval world to the modern world that it manifests itself in all its intensity. Its purpose is to project new worldviews, to demonstrate rationally and expansively the need to overcome the ongoing crisis, as well as to objectively, if not scientifically, promote the affirmation of the bases of a new worldview, of other forms of social, political and economic organization, as well as of modes of subjectivation articulated with the new challenges and ongoing productive and social demands.

Unreal, utopias? Logically "inconsistent"? Not at all; are thought of as possible horizons of concrete historical processes." Abstractly separated from tangible reality? No; matured by its observation closely linked to factors and subjects intrinsic to its development. They function, therefore, as tangible paradigms, decisive factors of processes that are deemed decisive and that incite to determine (Cacciari, 2016, p. 95, our translation).

Under these assumptions, modern utopias⁶ present themselves as an expression of economic and political rationality in the search for the constitution of forms of interpretation of natural, human and social phenomena, necessary for the constitution and affirmation of the modern worldview based on the control and domination of nature, conceived as a deposit of raw materials, but also of control of human nature and its ambivalent⁷ condition. In the affirmation of the predictability of human and social facts,

"New Atlantis". "An imaginary journey [...], which has the value of a metaphor, ends in the discovery of an island in the Pacific, called Bensalem, in which there is a School dedicated to the search for knowledge and the study of its applications; in other words, in which an Institute of Sciences and Techniques is established, with all due respect. This is because, for Bacon, theoretical philosophy is only of interest if accompanied by a practical philosophy; so also, to him, the reform of understanding passes through the reform of society" (Huissman, 2000, p. 398, our translation).

⁶ It is important to pay attention to Cacciari's comment on the utopias of More and Bacon, specifically when analyzing that "It is evident that to Thomas More it is not a matter of founding Utopia, or for Francis Bacon, the New Atlantis. For both, it is a matter of elaborating regulatory ideas, or rather, of instituting paradigms" (Cacciari, 2016, p. 95, our translation).

⁷ "We can say that existence is modern insofar as it is produced and sustained by design, manipulation, administration, planning. Existence is modern in the way that it is administered by capable agents (i.e., those who possess knowledge, ability, and technology) and sovereigns. Agents are sovereign insofar as they successfully claim and defend the right to manage and administer existence. The right to define order and, therefore, to set aside chaos as refuse that escapes definition. Typically, modern practice, the substance of modern politics, of the modern intellect, of modern life, is the effort to exterminate ambivalence: an effort to define precisely – and to suppress or eliminate everything that could not be or was not precisely defined" (Bauman, 1999, p. 15, our translation).

events and behaviors, as well as in the pretension of domination of the contingency of human phenomena, the belief is established that control, the rational mastery of the variables presented above, would necessarily lead human societies towards material, scientific and technological progress and, consequently, would affirm human and social development.

[...] modern utopia presents itself, on the contrary, as a rational construction, precisely in its paradoxical inquiries [...]. Utopia is essentially the idea of an evolution of history towards a future, if not precisely calculable, certainly paradigmatically valid, in its image, to guide present action. A future in which man is considered capable of pursuing and achieving by substantially obeying nothing more than reason and nature itself (Cacciari, 2016, p. 95, our translation).

The future desired by modern utopias is the affirmation, on rational, technical-scientific bases, of progress, of human development. "In first place, it seems to us that the introduction of remarkable discoveries occupies by far the highest position among human actions" (Bacon, 1973, p. 92). The human being asserts himself as the master of himself and nature, and it is from it that raw materials are extracted, transformed into consumer goods and wealth. It provides energy sources, as well as physical-chemical compounds, which, manipulated by science, will produce new elements, which will constitute synthetic objects not present in nature. In addition, it allows us to intervene in the dynamics of the manifestation of life of animals and plants, if not of human life itself. According to Bazzanella,

Exploiting, transforming, storing and distributing are the ways of dislodging. The world is transformed into a warehouse of goods and trinkets, the maximum expression of the consumer society, of a rationality that has been established in the belief of material progress [...] (Bazzanella, 2018, p. 258, our translation).

All considering the guarantee of uninterrupted progress and, more recently, human and social development. In this sense, for Bacon,

To engender and introduce new nature or new natures into a given body, such is the work and purpose of human power. And the work and purpose of human science is to discover the form of a given nature or its true difference or nature as a natural or source of emanation [...]. These primary companies are subordinated to two other secondary and inferior ones. The first is the transformation of concrete bodies from one to another, within the limits of what is possible; the second, the discovery of all generation and movement of the latent, continuous process, from the manifest agent to the implicit form, and also the discovery of latent schematism of quiescent and non-moving bodies (Bacon, 1973, p. 99, our translation).

Under these assumptions, it is in the context of the conformation of modern political economy, in its pretensions of scientificity on work, production, distribution and consumption of goods and socially produced wealth that anthropological, social and political prerogatives are established, shaping the utopia of an economy governed by the free market as a condition par excellence of affirmation of the modern utopia of progress and, contemporaneously, of development. For the affirmation of the free market as the first condition of the utopia of progress and development, it is imperative to articulate an anthropological and social interpretation, based on the science of economics and political economy as science. And it is here that we find the philosopher of morals, Adam Smith, and his statement regarding the market, who, according to Rosanvallon, interpreting Adam Smith's ideas, presents the following analysis:

It is no longer simply a particular and localized place of exchange; it is the whole of society that constitutes the market. [...] it is a mechanism of social organization rather than a mechanism of economic regulation. For Smith, the market is a political and sociological concept, and it is only as such that it has an economic dimension. In fact, he conceives the relations between men as relations between commodities, defining the nation as a system of needs. [...]. Smith does not make an apology for nascent capitalism, he does not conceal the relations between individuals behind the relations between commodities, he does not reduce social life to economic activities: he thinks of the economy as the foundation of society and the market as the operator of social life (Rosanvallon, 2002, p. 87, our translation).

The modern utopia of the free market, as a condition for progress and development, is based on a pragmatic anthropological conception. The human being is a being who calculates his actions and relationships with other human beings and society, in the search for favorable opportunities for the maintenance and expansion of his material living conditions. Smith's homo oeconomicus is not reduced to a merely calculating and utilitarian being in the set of human and natural relations. In this sense, let us observe the following consideration by Robert Nisbet: "When Smith's friends or foes refer to his enthusiasm for competition and free enterprise, they often omit the essential phrase: "as long as he observes the rule of justice" (Nisbet, 1985, p. 199). The author is aware that human action in view of its own interest needs to consider adequate social conditions so that freedom of economic action (market) can occur in an equitable, balanced way, preserving the freedom of individuals.

In this way, Rosanvallon asserts that

[...] it does not conceive property rights as simple relations between men and objects, but as codified relations between men that refer to the use of objects. For Smith, man's being and his power are identified with his property. Man is only free as an owner (Rosanvallon, 2002, p. 88, our translation).

His anthropological conception results in his conception of society. It is a society founded on the primacy of economic relations and in relation to political issues. The freedom of market results in social organization, establishes social classes and the dynamics of their relations of production and consumption. Thus, the greater the guarantees of deterritorialization and exercise of market freedom, the greater the conditions for the possibility of human and social development. Or, to put it another way, the free-market utopia determines human and social development. "This representation of society as a market is not simply static, it is dynamic. The market not only structures society, but it is also the means and the end of its development" (Rosanvallon, 2002, p. 91).

From such analytical perspectives, it can be seen that modernity institutes the social sphere as the sum of individuals who act from their own interests and, thus,

constitute the freedom of market as a presupposition of action and, above all, of social organization. In this context, the political and economic management of individuals, populations and modern societies has been affirmed with the advancement of scientific rationality in the most diverse areas of human knowledge. In this way, economics will be conformed into science, in the form of political economy, which begins to focus on the motivations that underlie the will, the affirmation of desire for freedom and desire to achieve social equality. The fulfilment of progress, of social, political and material human order, therefore, grounds, justifies and mobilizes ideas and actions in search of materialization of the utopian projections of modernity to the present day in the affirmation of the utopia of development.

3 The ideology of development

The utopia of progress, constituted in the context of modern political economy, presented itself in the 20th century as an ideology⁸ of development. The concept of ideology that guides this debate conceives it as a set of ideas, practices, values and proposals for action that are hegemonic in a given historical, political, social and economic context, as a guide for the action of individuals, people and countries.

Thus, an ideology is not necessarily "false": as for its positive content, it can be "true", very precise, because what really matters is not the content affirmed as such, but the way in which this content relates to the subjective posture involved in its enunciation process (Žižek, 1996, p. 13, our translation).

The affirmation of an ideology occurs when a worldview is constituted, guiding the lives of individuals and societies, which acts from mechanisms of individual control and, as a result of social domination, without such conditions being perceived or questioned by human groups subjected to such conditions of control, domination and

⁸ For a deeper understanding of development as an ideology, we recommend the following reading: BAZZANELLA, Sandro Luiz; GODOI, Cintia Neves; MARCHESAN, Jairo; TOMPOROSKI, Alexandre Assis. Development: concept or ideology? Revista Desenvolvimento em Debate, v. 10, n. 1, p. 57-79, Jan./Apr. 2022. Available at: https://inctpped.ie.ufrj.br/desenvolvimentoemdebate/pdf/revista_dd_v10_n1_alexandre_tomporoski.pdf.

expropriation of their worldview. The effectiveness of an ideology is constituted by maintaining under the absence of foundation a utopia that affects the way of life of individuals and societies, guiding the worldview, expectations, beliefs, action, and processes of subjectivation of communities, people and countries, causing the context of control and domination in which they are inserted to be disregarded.

We are within the ideological space proper at the moment when this content – "true or false" (if true, so much the better for the ideological effect) – is functional with respect to some relation of social domination ("power", "exploitation" in an intrinsically non-transparent way: to be effective, the logic of legitimation of the relation of domination has to remain hidden. In other words, the starting point of the critique of ideology has to be the full recognition of the fact that it is very easy to lie under the guise of truth (Žižek, 1996, p. 13, our translation).

In the first decades of the 20th century, we are faced with the limits of the utopia of progress, gestated and articulated by the modern political economy which, based on technical, scientific and productive advances, feed the utopia of continuous and uninterrupted development. The contradictions of the utopia of progress have as collateral effects: the imperialism of the developed Western states over Africa, Middle East and regions of Asia and Latin America; the intensive and extensive destruction of nature; continuous advancement of the society of full production and consumption; constant economic crises; brutal economic and social inequality between people. At the height of these phenomena, it caused the outbreak of two European wars (which many call World), which put scientific and technological advances on the battlefield, decimating millions of lives, a brutal phenomenon not witnessed in human history until then. Such a dreadful condition, arising from the utopia of progress, culminated in 1945 with the atomic bombs dropped by the US on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Definitely, we are faced with the risks of modern economic and technical-scientific rationality that, in its specialized and instrumental condition, contaminate human action, its capacity for ethical reflection, its forms of relationship with itself, with other forms of life present in nature and with other human communities and people. In this context of affirmation of the ideology of progress, let us look at Walter Benjamin's thesis IX "On the concept of history".

There is a painting by Klee entitled "Angelus Novus". In it, an angel is represented, who seems to be at the moment of moving away from something on which he fixes his gaze. His eyes are wide, his mouth is open, and his wings are outstretched. The angel of history has to look that way. He has his face turned to the past. Where a supper of events appears before us, he sees a single catastrophe, which ceaselessly heaps rubble upon rubble and hurls it at his feet. He would like to linger, to awaken the dead and gather the wreckage. But from paradise over a storm that has become entangled in its wings and is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm propels him irresistibly into the future, to which he turns his back, while the pile of rubble before him grows to the sky. What we call progress is this storm (Benjamin, 2005, p. 87, our translation).

During the historical period Post-World War II, the utopia of progress turned unfeasible by its contradictions, creating an ideology of development. More specifically, the ideology of development was presented to the world from the speech of January 20, 1949, by U.S. President Harry S. Truman, also known as the "State of the Union Address", in which the proposal for development is announced in point IV of the speech. Systematically, the ideology of development disseminates the idea that conflicts, wars and the destruction of people and countries would be effectively overcome when the inequalities in development between people and countries were overcome. Ideologically, it is intended to justify the barbarism of the 1st and 2nd World Wars, which occurred mostly on European soil, based on the verification of the existence of underdeveloped people.

Under such assumptions, the affirmation of the ideology of development requires that people and countries begin to recognize their subordinate, underdeveloped condition, that is, it arises with totalitarian connotations⁹, insofar as it imposes on people and countries, in their local and regional singularities, unilateral criteria to define what a

⁹ "From the end of the First World War it is indeed evident that for European nation-states there are no longer any assignable historical tasks. We completely misunderstand the nature of the great totalitarian experiments of the twentieth century if we see them only as continuations of the last tasks of the nineteenth-century nation-states: nationalism and imperialism. What is at stake now is something absolutely different and much more extreme because it is a matter of assuming as a task the pure and simple factual existence of people – that is, in the final analysis, their bare life. In this, the totalitarianisms of our century really constitute the other face of the Hegelo-Kojevian idea of an end of history: man has now reached his historical telos and there is nothing left but the depoliticization of human societies through the unconditional unfolding of the realm of oikonomia, or even the admission of biological life itself as an extreme political task. But when the political paradigm – as is true in both cases – becomes the house, therefore the proper one, the most intimate facticity of existence runs the risk of becoming a fatal trap. And we, today, live in this trap" (Agamben, 2015, p. 125-126, our translation).

developed country is. From then on, development is the state or condition of the country that demonstrates the ability to articulate its material and human resources for the constitution of a society of full production and consumption. Economic growth measured by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the criterion for measuring the degree of development. Developed countries will be considered those with the highest GDPs on a global scale. Continuously, people and countries that do not fit into the logic of economic growth defined by capital under the aegis of the ideology of development, immediately began to be classified as "underdeveloped".

El adjetivo “subdesarrollado” aparece al comienzo del primer párrafo del “Punto IV”. Es la primera vez que se utiliza en un texto destinado a una difusión semejante como sinónimo de “regiones económicamente atrasadas” [...]. Esta innovación terminológica modifica el sentido del término “desarrollo”, introduciendo una relación inédita entre “desarrollo” y subdesarrollo (Rist, 2013, p. 93, our translation).

Criticism of the limits of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as an indicator of the development of countries led to the creation of other indicators for this purpose. Among them, we find the Human and Social Development Index (HDI), the quality of life related to access to income, food, housing and public services, among other existing indicators. The function of such indicators is to evaluate public policies and government programs that encourage development at local and regional levels. Or, in other words, such indicators intend to measure, based on the criteria inherent to them, developed localities and regions and, conversely and by comparison, based on such indicators, precarious localities and regions, with lower development indices in order to guide public managers to efficiently and effectively manage the human resources (individuals and populations) present in a given locality or region considering the fostering of social and productive processes supposedly necessary to achieve development, conceived under the aegis of the rationality of capital of full production and full consumption.

Thus, in a first movement, the ideology of development imposes on a significant part of the people of the earth, a criterion of exclusion from the condition of being developed. “Los distintos usos de la palabra tienen en común que presentan al ‘desarrollo’ – conforme a la tradición occidental del concepto – como un fenómeno

intransitivo que, simplemente, ‘se produce’ sin que se pueda cambiar nada en él (Rist, 2013, p. 93). On the other hand, the people excluded from the condition of being developed, especially in the West (Eurasian people, under the guidance of the extinct Soviet Union; China, Cuba, among other countries of socialist orientation, refused in a certain context the ideology of capitalist development), began to accept and, concomitantly, impose on their people the acceptance of their state of underdevelopment. For the ideology of development, it was a matter of inflicting on the so-called underdeveloped people and countries the condition of subordination, if not of inability to achieve the development model advocated and experienced by the developed people and countries.

The ideology of development also has the pretension of annihilating the memory inscribed in the flesh and history of underdeveloped people, the violence perpetrated by the colonizers in the form of extraction, plundering of natural resources, as well as the wealth produced in the colony at the expense of extensive use and abuse of slave labor. It is a matter of sanitizing the memory of the colonized from the violence perpetrated by the regime of capital accumulation conducted by the metropolises, which allowed those countries to achieve the condition of developed people. Under these assumptions, it is necessary to keep in mind that the ideology of development is based on the physical, material and symbolic violence of the developed over the so-called underdeveloped. At the same time, recognize the violence disseminated within underdeveloped societies expressed in social prejudice, racism between social classes, exacerbated exploitation of workers and women's labor, among other variables. From this perspective, Theotonio dos Santos argues that:

Development theory became an academic discipline in the post-war period, in the 1950s. This date is not accidental. During these years, the national liberation movement emerged in the colonies and companies from the United States and other capitalist centers began to invest massively in dependent countries. In order to respond to the revolutionary challenge in the colonial world (both for those who wanted to promote it and for those who wanted to combat it) and to establish an industrial economy in relatively backward countries, it was necessary to know in more detail the mechanisms of economic development (Santos, 1991, p. 14, our translation).

To people and countries that assimilated their condition of underdevelopment, the ideology of development effectively suggested that they abandon their pretensions of constituting national development projects. Such national development projects, when implemented, deepened the perception of social contradictions. Intensified the class struggle and prevented capital from making investments, due to political, social and institutional instabilities of the subaltern countries. The solution to these institutional and social instabilities was to promote, in Latin American countries, military coups d'état that would guarantee the interests of the national oligarchic elites subservient to international capital committed to national development. Especially in the case of Brazil, Theotonio dos Santos argues as follows:

Under this inspiration, institutional military coups were staged based on the doctrine of national security that identified counterinsurgent action with the tasks of economic development and socio-political modernization, with the help of the Alliance for Progress¹⁰ and social reforms instituted under military control (Santos, 1991, p. 206, our translation).

Under these assumptions, the ideology of development disseminates the idea that underdevelopment is a transitory condition, which requires the assimilation of the economic and political prescription coming from the developed countries, that is, this ideology disseminates a philosophy of history marked by the determinism of development. The people are condemned by the march of history to reach development, as long as they follow the guidelines and requirements of the developed people. Thus, the ideology of development is presented as a utopia to guide and mobilize the efforts, expectations and demands of people and countries to achieve development. Ideology limits, or makes impossible, inquiries that destabilize the architecture of the system of exploitation and expropriation of subaltern people, among many

¹⁰ "From the postulation of the Monroe Doctrine in the first quarter of the nineteenth century to the implementation of the Good Neighbor Policy in the 1930s, the United States sought to exercise, in a continuous, always paternalistic and often violent manner, its economic dominance, political-diplomatic preponderance, and cultural and ideological influence in the Western Hemisphere. In the post-World War II period, this pattern of behavior acquired a new format, more coordinated and multifaceted from 1961 onwards. [...]. Guided by an important change in perception about the role of the United States in the continent, which had already begun in the last years of the Eisenhower administration, with the creation of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the negotiations around the Pan-American Operation, Kennedy took office determined to innovate. His first step, already in his second month in office, was to announce to the Latin American delegations in Washington the formulation of a broad set of policies and programs, presented under the suggestive label of an Alliance for Progress (AFP)" (Ioris; Mozer, 2019, p. 53, our translation).

other possible ones: What is development? What are the criteria that define what development is? What is underdevelopment? What is the origin and purpose of this conceptualization? What are its political and social implications?

El “desarrollo” toma entonces un sentido transitivo (el de una acción ejercida por un agente sobre alguien distinto a él) correspondiendo a un principio de organización social, mientras que el “subdesarrollo” será considerado como un estado que existe “naturalmente”, es decir, sin causa aparente. [...]. La nueva dicotomía “desarrollados/subdesarrollados” propone una relación diferente conforme a la nueva Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos y a la progresiva mundialización del sistema estatal. La antigua relación jerárquica de las colonias sometidas a su metrópoli es sustituida por un mundo en el que todos (los estados) son iguales en derecho, aunque no lo sean (todavía) de hecho. El colonizado y el colonizador pertenecen a dos universos no solo distintos, sino incluso opuestos y, para reducir la diferencia, el enfrentamiento – la lucha de liberación nacional – parece inevitable. [...]. En el plano conceptual, el nuevo binomio “desarrollo/subdesarrollo” introduce la idea de una continuidad “sustancial” entre los dos términos que solo se diferencian relativamente entre sí. El estado de “subdesarrollo” no es el inverso del “desarrollo”, sino su forma aún inacabada o, para mantenermos en la metáfora biológica, “embrionaria”; en estas condiciones, una aceleración del crecimiento aparece como el único método para colmar la diferencia (Rist, 2013, p. 94, our translation).

The strength of an ideology can also be evaluated by its ability to metamorphose, to constantly disseminate explanations, to offer interpretative variations and to suggest new forms of action. In short, to keep the belief in utopia on the horizon. Thus, the ideology of development has transitioned, over the decades, from the development prescriptions for underdeveloped people, via international agencies (UN, World Bank, IMF, WTO, among others), to the accountability, from the 1970s onwards, of underdeveloped countries for their disregard for human rights, democracy¹¹ and, as a result of these precariousness, low human and social development indices are presented. This means that reaching the utopia of development is the responsibility of people and countries to the extent that they are committed to the defense of

¹¹ It is important to consider that the defense of democracy as a regime par excellence, led at the global level by the United States and its developed allies, has become an ideological narrative to impose its prescriptions on underdeveloped people, as well as to interfere in the internal affairs of such countries, among other situations. “En rigor, las formas de la democracia constitucional son compatibles con una dictadura invisible del poder económico concentrado, en un contexto neopatrimonialista de abuso de poder, es decir de corrupción política. El liberismo – liberalismo económico sostenido en el autoritarismo político –ya no requiere de las dictaduras militares. Le basta con condicionar a los gobiernos democráticos, con poner a sus tecnócratas en lugares clave del Estado y con manejar la información mediante los multimedios concentrados” (Flax, 2013, p. 61, our translation).

democracy, defense of human rights and civil and social rights, at the same time democracies and rights that the world powers do not hesitate to ignore and violate, especially in people and countries considered to be peripheral.

At the end of the 1980s, in the face of the globalization of capital, the ideology of development spatialized the utopia of development. It is about mobilizing the vitality and energy of local and regional communities in search of development, through innovations and entrepreneurial actions, which can enhance the dynamics of capital present and articulated at the local, regional and global levels as a way of affirming development strategies.

From 1940 onwards, the United Nations (UN)¹² established a series of actions and meetings to discuss and propagandize development for countries. There were, therefore, seven decades of development, which began with proposals for technical support for industrialization, among other actions, and which in recent years have become more complex. Thus, in the early 2000s, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were presented. From 2015 onwards, a new development agenda was presented, led by the United Nations, with the affirmation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and, in this way, the ideology of development expanded, pulverized the debate and development initiatives, in a set of objectives that are allegedly committed to sustainability.

These variations of the ideology of development throughout the second half of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century demonstrate the effectiveness of this ideology in sanitizing violence, exploitation, and conflicts between colonizers and colonized; to hold the so-called underdeveloped people responsible for their subordinate condition; to socialize with the people of the world the human and environmental destruction promoted by the logic of capital that underlies and disseminates the ideology of development.

¹² From the virtual address, the UN presents its proposal for dividing decades of development. According to this division, between 1946 and 1959, the organization concentrated efforts on technical assistance and international cooperation, laying the foundations for future initiatives. The First Decade of Development (1960-1970) sought to accelerate economic growth in developing countries, followed by the Second (1971-1980), which broadened the focus to social justice and poverty reduction. The Third Decade (1981-1990) emphasized the need for structural adjustments and economic stability. Beginning in 1991, the UN Human Development Reports reformulated the approach, prioritizing quality of life and human capabilities. With the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), the global commitment turned to the eradication of extreme poverty and the expansion of access to education and health. Currently, the Sustainable Development Goals (2016-2030) consolidate a broader agenda, integrating economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental preservation. This proposal can be found at the following virtual address <https://research.un.org/en/docs/dev/>.

4 Development in the context of neoliberal ideology

Considering the aforementioned, the question to be considered presents itself as follows: Is the ideology (utopia) of development still justified in the context of neoliberal hegemony? In order to debate this condition, it is imperative to present a definition of neoliberalism sufficient to introduce arguments implied in this debate.

Under these assumptions, it is initially necessary to recognize that the concept of neoliberalism is the bearer of an intense and extensive historical path throughout the 20th century to the present day. In this sense, according to Dardot and Laval (2016, p. 8, our translation),

Understanding neoliberalism politically presupposes understanding the nature of the social and political project that it has represented and promoted since the 1930s. It carries within a very particular idea of democracy which, in many respects, derives from an anti-democratism: private law should be exempt from all deliberation and any control even in the form of universal suffrage. This is the reason why the unchecked logic of self-strengthening and radicalization of neoliberalism today obeys a historical scenario that is not that of the 1930s, when a revision of the doctrines and policies of "Laissez-faire" took place. This closed system prevents any self-correction of trajectory, in particular due to the deactivation of the democratic game and even, in certain aspects, of politics as an activity. The neoliberal system is making us enter the post-democratic era.

From this perspective, neoliberalism does not present itself as a rewriting of liberal assumptions in the face of the set of crisis faced by liberalism between the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century and which culminated in the deep economic crisis of the 1930s, the rise of fascism and, as a result, the establishment of totalitarian movements and states, of which the Italian fascist state and the German Nazi state were the most representative experiences. This context of crisis is permeated by the two great wars that took place on European soil, that is, neoliberalism was constituted as a political and economic doctrine in face of the limits of the regime of capital accumulation within the European liberal democratic states of the first half of the 20th century. Lazzaratto (2019, p. 26, our translation), on this matter, argues that:

The total wars of the first half of the twentieth century transformed war into industrial war and fascism into mass organization of counterrevolution. Now we have a century behind us that allows us to affirm that war and fascism are at the same time political and economic forces necessary for the conversion of the accumulation of capital [...].

Still in relation to the emergence of neoliberalism in its fundamental assumptions, Dardot and Laval clarify:

Neoliberalism, therefore, is not the natural heir of the first liberalism, just as it is not its misplacement or betrayal. It does not resume the issue of the limits of the government from where it left off. Neoliberalism no longer asks itself what kind of limit to give to political government, to the market (Adam Smith), to rights (John Locke) or to the calculation of utility (Jeremy Bentham), but rather about how to make the market both the principle of the government of men and the government of the self [...]. Considered a governmental rationality, and not a more or less heteroclitic doctrine, neoliberalism is precisely the development of the logic of the market as a generalized normative logic, from the State to the most intimate of subjectivity (Dardot; Laval, 2016, p. 34, our translation).

Thus, neoliberalism can be understood as a governmental rationality, or more specifically, a regime of governmentality¹³ over individuals and populations taken as human resources, as human and social capital, presented to the regime of capital accumulation in its financialized and deterritorialized form. On the economic level, he preaches the freedom of the market as the condition par excellence to promote human and social development. It disseminates the belief that the non-interference of the state in the direction of the economy in its private, business and corporate dynamics tends to promote virtuous conditions for productive investments, for the generation of jobs and for the equitable promotion of the global development of people and countries.

In this context, the State is reduced to an agency that guarantees the contracts of free circulation and accumulation of capital linked to the global financialized economy.

¹³ "'The revolt of the poorest and most ignorant' of the slaves is not biological, but a-organic, a-biological. The function of governmentality is to prevent, neutralize, undo the 'revolution'; It is, therefore, a policy of the a-organic, that is, a policy of the possible and the impossible. Governmentality is not only that which intervenes in the life of the species, dealing with illness and health, life and death, but, in a much more fundamental way, that which decides what is possible and what is impossible" (Lazzarato, 2019, p. 147, our translation).

In another direction but converging with the logic of the free market and the freedom of the economy, the State, on the social and political level, is reduced to the condition of a security State¹⁴, provider of basic public services to populational masses, as well as guarantor of public order and security in the face of the demands of significant portions of the population. After all, deterritorialized capital spreads the ideology that development can only be promoted in conditions of political stability and social security.

Así, no es en absoluto irrelevante que sea lo securitario lo que triunfa con el neoliberalismo [...], lo securitario corresponde al arbitraje exclusivo del Estado. Se trata en realidad de una orientación fundamental [...]. Esta orientación surge de una única racionalidad: el neoliberalismo. En su principio mismo, a concentrar la realidad del poder en manos de los actores económicos más poderosos en detrimento de la masa de los ciudadanos, la razón política neoliberal somete a la población a la inseguridad y procede a disciplinarla, desactiva la democracia y fragmenta la sociedad (Laval; Dardot, 2017, p. 11, our translation).

Neoliberalism, however, is not only a financialized and deterritorialized economic proposal based on the free market and the hegemony of the economy over politics. It is, above all, a normative system and a way of subjectivation. "[...], neoliberalism is not just an ideology, a type of economic policy. It is a normative system that has extended its influence to the whole world, extending the logic of capital to all social relations and all spheres of life" (Dardot; Laval, 2016, p. 7). Its full operationality requires the full atomization of individuals, the withering away of the public sphere, of common political action, as well as the reduction of the concept of representative democracy to the freedom of individuals to express their opinions on social media and virtual platforms.

¹⁴ In an article published by the online newspaper "Outras Palavras" on January 4, 2016, Giorgio Agamben demonstrates how in the context of Western democratic societies the logic of security states that undermine the conditions for the possibility of democracy is contemporaneously affirmed. "Likewise, the security in question today is not intended to prevent acts of terrorism. [...]. It is intended to establish a new relationship with men, which is that of generalized and unlimited control. [...]. In the security state, there is an irreproachable tendency towards what can only be called a progressive depoliticization of citizens, whose participation in politics is reduced to the ballot box. This trend is particularly worrying and had even been theorized by Nazi jurists, defining the people as an essentially apolitical element, whose state must guarantee protection and growth. [...] what needs to be understood is that, by depoliticizing citizens, they will not be able to get out of their passivity, since they are mobilized by fear against a foreign enemy that is not only external (as in the case of the Jews in Germany or, now, with Muslims in France)" (Agamben, 2016, our translation).

This means that democracy is synonymous with paradoxically private public opinion. In relation to the spectrum of democracy, Lazzarato states that:

In the framework created by the advance of the project of political secession of the "rich" and by the impotence of the forces that would like to stop it, democracy is no longer good for anything. Representative democracy did not enter into a "crisis" with neoliberalism, since the legislative power that was supposed to conduct and legitimize it began to be neutralized by the executive power after the First World War. Industrial war does not take place without a reconfiguration of the executive power that does not end with the end of hostilities, but which, on the contrary, progressively reduce the parliament to a simple appendix for ratifying and legitimizing the decrees of the true legislative power, which is in the hands of the government [...]. Democracy has always been understood by liberals as the democracy of the holders. They have always conceived rights as indexed to property. It was the revolutions that imposed equality and conquered political and social rights "for all". Once the revolution was broken up and the inability of anti-capitalist forces to reorganize it was verified, democracy logically disappeared. Capitalism can function within different political systems: constitutional democracy, a centralizing and authoritarian state as in China, Russia or fascist regimes. The idea that capital is always accompanied by democracy is contradicted every day (Lazzarato, 2019, p. 54-55, our translation).

Neoliberalism, by circumscribing the optimization of individuals to the spheres of production and consumption, suggests to them that achieving professional, financial and social success is the result of their willingness to become an entrepreneur of themselves and to assume an entrepreneurial attitude towards life and human relationships, especially in the professional and business environment. That is, individual life is captured by capital and transformed into "human capital" and, by extension, social life is transformed into "social capital". These are strategies for privatizing the behavior of social life to the sphere of individual responsibilities. On this issue, Dardot and Laval state that:

Hence the "pedagogical" work that must be done so that each individual considers himself to be the holder of a "human capital" that he must make bear fruits, hence the establishment of devices that are intended to "activate" individuals, forcing them to take care of themselves, educate themselves, find a job (Dardot; Laval, 2016, p. 231, our translation).

Considering the aforementioned, it is imperative to recognize that the ideology of development remains active as a utopia of development, now mobilizing the yearnings and expectations of individuals captured by the devices of capital, existentially and socially reduced to the condition of human capital, launched in the challenge of becoming entrepreneurs of themselves, entrepreneurs at the service of the neoliberal logic of deterritorialized and global accumulation of socially produced wealth. Thus, the ideology (utopia) of development that was once national, replaced by the ideology (utopia) of human and social, local, regional and territorial development, and currently pulverized in the "Millennium Development Goals" and, later, the "Sustainable Development Goals", with a view to the socialization of efforts to sustain the threatened life on the planet, maintains its vitality and fulfills its function within the framework of the neoliberal worldview.

In the neoliberal context, therefore, the ideology (utopia) of development presents itself in all its ambivalence. On the one hand, an ideology deprived by capital of its possibilities to give rise to the affirmation of national, or even local and regional development projects that promote the human and social condition. On the other hand, an (in)convenient ideology regarding the promotion of sustainability, insofar as it can contribute to the recognition of capital's responsibilities in the face of environmental destruction, but which, on the other hand, can also give rise to movements of resistance in relation to the (in)human and aggressive logic of capital in relation to life.

Neoliberal political and economic rationality imposes limits on the ideology (utopia) of development by emptying politics, privatizing the public space and reducing the citizen to a mere producer and consumer, in the societal dynamics of full production and full consumption. In this context of profound privatization of the spheres of collective social organization, of social movements, of representative entities in the name of stability and political and social security required for the regime of capital accumulation, the possibility of debate and the affirmation of a national development project no longer presents itself. For Lazzarato,

Of the world network of parties, organizations, movements and even states that, in different ways, "work" for the revolution, there is literally nothing left. The capitalist globalization that destroyed it is a strategic

response to the world revolution. Despite this, any policy conceived within the borders of the nation-state is destined to fail (Lazzarato, 2016, p. 183).

5 Final considerations

The strength of scientific and political discourses and social perceptions of development lies in their utopian and ideological condition. Or, in other words, despite the emptying of the affirmation of national development projects, promoted by the ongoing neoliberal political and economic rationality, the ideas of development remain present in the popular and social imagination in their localized demands, whether at the regional or territorial level.

Neoliberalism, by promoting the emptying of politics as a sphere of community and social action in relation to the maintenance of public space and public goods shared by the national community, made the conditions for the possibility of debate and constitution of national development projects unfeasible. The privatization of individuals, subjected to the struggle for survival, as entrepreneurs of themselves, under the logic of a deterritorialized economy that operates from debit and credit, has kidnapped the State as the space of excellence of the political within which tensions and disputes flourish around a project of national development, which, to a greater or lesser extent, contemplate the interests of the various social classes in dispute, based on criteria based on social justice.

In this context, the kidnapping the capacity of the State and society to foster and guarantee the balance of political disputes between social classes, with a view to the constitution of a national development project, the State was rearticulated in its functions. On the one hand, as a minimal State in the face of political and social demands for social justice and, on the other hand, as a maximum or security State, intensifying the management of the bodily biology of individuals and the population, conceived under the aegis of neoliberal political and economic rationality as human capital, social capital and resources at the disposal of the regime of capital accumulation. Likewise, it is the responsibility of the security State to continuously monitor and control individuals, social movements or social manifestations that may affect contracts and, above all, the

guarantees required of the State by the dynamics of the ongoing deterritorialized economy.

From the political perspectives of the political and economic agenda of neoliberal governments, social initiatives around the aspirations of constituting a national development project are unfeasible. But, it seems, the strength of the utopia of progress and development remains in the social imaginary, especially in that of peripheral people who yearn for the day of entry into the category of developed people and, with it, the achievement of the desired and fair quality of life. It is under this just human and social desire that neoliberalism activates the ideology of development and, consistent with its political and economic foundations, attributes the responsibility for the constitution of a development project to localities and regions. Acting in this way, the ideology of development, under the aegis of neoliberalism, keeps mobilizing the yearnings of individuals privatized at the local level (devoid of a conception of national development) for achieving development. And, at the same time, it holds these same individuals, in their local and regional condition, responsible for their category of underdeveloped and peripheral. In other words, if the local or regional does not develop, this condition of failure is the responsibility of individuals and their communities at the local and regional levels to articulate themselves to achieve development opportunities.

Thus, the strength of the development discourse is maintained from its utopian and ideological condition of origin in political economy, even if under the assumptions of neoliberal political and economic rationality the social and political conditions for the articulation of a development project, even if at the local and regional level, under the prerogatives of social justice have been hijacked and denied to individuals and the population. Perhaps we are facing the need to desecrate the neoliberal ideology of development and return it to common use, to the community sphere.

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ⁱⁱⁱ Author contributions: conceptualization; data curation; formal analysis; fundraising; research; methodology; project management; supervision; validation; visualization; writing - original and written draft - analysis and editing.

^{iv} Author contributions: conceptualization; data curation; formal analysis; fundraising; research; methodology; project management; supervision; validation; visualization; writing - original and written draft - analysis and editing.