

BRAZILIAN EXPERIENCE WITH THE CREATION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (CDES) AND THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA (AND) – LESSONS LEARNED

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During the first years of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's administration, initiated in 2003, Brazil successfully conquered macroeconomic stability without impairing social inclusion. Successful social programs were implemented, and the hard combination of growing while simultaneously combating chronic social inequalities was challenged. The *bolsa-familia* program was consolidated, assisting approximately 11 million families – one of the largest income transfer programs in the world; family agriculture was strengthened, supporting it with micro-credit and technology; innumerable hunger combat and food security and nutrition efforts became concrete, amongst other initiatives in accordance to the United Nations Development Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The document generated during the 2005 Summit gathered in its content the various governmental commitments of previous conferences and introduced the concept of Development Goals with international consensus, broadening the scope of the MDGs. In other words, there was an attempt to change the emphasis concentrated on solving specific problems, to an examination of development in a broader sense, identifying the so-called National Development Strategies.

The Economic and Social Development Council – CDES has been working within this perspective in Brazil since it was created on February 2003.

CDES: Governance for the National Development Project

The Economic and Social Development Council – CDES – is a mainly civil society organism characterized by its consulting activity for the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil. The Council has become consolidated as an instrument of Brazilian democracy and some characteristics that have contributed to this success can be singled out:

- Its diverse composition – including entrepreneurs, working class leaderships, social movement representatives, members of the academia, amongst other relevant social players;
- The focus on development issues – the diversity in the composition of the council made it possible to have a broader concept of development that encompasses economic, social, political, and environmental aspects;
- The exercise of carrying out social dialogue to synthesize the predominant values and interests in society.

Taking into consideration that this meeting, one of the Annual Ministerial Review Meetings (AMR), aims to be a new vehicle to promote the implementation of the UN Development Agenda, using this global forum, with broad world participation, to systematically review this Agenda while, simultaneously, promoting an exchange of lessons learned and successful practices in different countries, I will take advantage of this opportunity to report on the Brazilian experience in developing and monitoring its own **National Development Agenda**, followed by the development of **Strategic Statements for Development**, which are suggestions made by the Council to the State and civil society of planning guidelines that came as a consequence of a complex discussion and agreement process. Since its creation, the methodology for the CDES work had the goal of supporting a group of necessary actions for Brazil to reach a path of sustained and sustainable development giving priority to the equity issue.

To be able to follow-up the implementation of the Agenda ensuring that public policies have equity as their central objective, the CDES also began functioning as an Observatory, named **Equity Observatory**.

The above mentioned documents, which I will speak of afterwards, were designed to build a development strategy for Brazil, and coincidentally, keep in mind the main topic of this preparatory meeting for the AMR: “to grow, gathering strengths for a better distribution of income with the main objective of eradicating poverty and hunger”.

If we look at the basic focus of the development theory that was adopted in Latin America, we see that it was built very closely to the thesis first presented by Raul Prebisch and later by Celso Furtado, when both worked at the United Nations Commission for Latin America. This thesis, specifically, is built upon the perception that countries are not the same. These countries should develop taking into consideration their own specific historic conditions, and must build strategies based upon the changes that took place throughout time and with ample participation of Society.

CDES: National Development Agenda

Going back to our Council's work, I would like to point out that one of the objectives present in our Development Agenda is to try to reach an agreement between Government and Society with respect to a long term development policy. In other words, a strategic guideline that goes beyond the current administration.

When drafting the Agenda, a group of guidelines was identified for the actions of all social players committed to combating the problems that hinder the Country's development and willing to build the new situation we want for Brazil.

The members of the CDES council sought a perspective of reality that made it possible to understand the current moment we live in. More than that, we wanted a perspective that could identify converging interests to be able to overcome these situations according to the diagnosis presented. Overall, the intention was that the Agenda lead to a commitment to intervene and transform this reality.

The National Development Agenda was the consequence of collective work involving all council members. It aims at going beyond corporate sectoral interests to identify items of public interest in the perspective of the development of the Country and Nation. It is important to understand, however, that as an expression that seeks consensus, the Agenda presents the possible choices of the group of social players.

During its development we identified a vision of the future, of the Brazil we wish to have, and that guided the entire debate, synthesized in the following text:

“A democratic and cohesive country, in which iniquity has been overcome, and all Brazilians have full capacity to exercise their citizenship; social peace and public security have been attained; sustained and sustainable development are on track; diversity, especially cultural diversity, is valued. A respected nation inserted in the global scenario with sovereignty, committed to world peace and union amongst peoples”.

With this definition of future the Council members worked together to draft the details of our Agenda seeking to answer the following question: which action guidelines promote transformations and materialize this vision of the future?

The main challenge was to develop systemic reasoning from the pulverized perception of innumerable localized problems to be able to understand the situation of the problem and the future we wish. Each council member gave up his (her) sectoral perspective to think of development in this systemic manner.

CDES: Strategic Statements for Development

The Strategic Statements were a consequence of the work carried out for the National Development Agenda. They list agreed upon priorities for development, proposing goals. The statements give relevance and urgency to programs on infrastructure investment, political reform, and quality education. To the great satisfaction of our council members and as an indicative of the CDES's success, a large part of the proposals present in the statements appears in the two main programs released by President Lula in his second mandate: the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC) and the Education Development Plan (PDE). Both PAC and PDE represent programs that insert themselves in a broader project for growth with equity and the insertion of marginalized populations into the market economy.

CDES: the Equity Observatory

The CDES Equity Observatory was proposed when drafting the National Development Agenda, with the objective of contributing with capacity and instruments to measure and follow-up the way in which the problem of inequalities in Brazilian society was being tackled and to give support to the proposal of public policies and social actions that might effectively promote greater equity. The Observatory receives technical support from civil society and government institutions acknowledged for their excellence and tradition and have been promoting development dialogue and mobilization networks.

In the Equity Observatory and in other Working Groups, the CDES organizes itself to: formulate new proposals for both the PAC and the PDE; to follow-up, monitor results, and mobilize society on national priorities. With regards to education, the CDES, by means of the Equity Observatory, made the following recommendation to the President of the Republic for the second mandate:

“Education should be considered a national priority. Education should be considered a structuring and coordinating element for pro-equity public policies, functioning in a systemic and integrated manner with the science and technology policy, interacting with the various realities of the Country and reaching all age brackets and all educational levels and modalities”.

Future challenges

The CDES, with its own strategic objectives, and responding to the expectations of President Lula expressed during the first Plenary Council Session during the second mandate, currently faces the following challenges:

- Permanent improvement of the CDES as an instrument of Brazilian democracy, through evaluations, technical and institutional consolidation, and the exchange of experiences with other similar initiatives.
- To contribute to the expansion movement of Councils throughout the states of the Brazilian Federation and Latin American countries.
- The opportunity of presiding the AICESIS – the International Association for Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions, from July 2007 on, with the perspective of contributing to the debate on social dialogue and development, to better disseminate its experience, and, especially, to learn from the experiences of others.