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Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (Eds.). *International Development and the Social Sciences*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. 373 pp. \$20.00 (paper). ISBN 0-520-20957-5.

These case studies primarily discuss how views of economic development are “constructed” and evaluated by academics and development practitioners. The back cover emphasizes the diversity of the contributors “from the fields of economics, anthropology, history, political science, and public health.” In fact, only one of the eleven contributors is an economist, and he is a heterodox economist at that. Since the editors acknowledge (p. 13) the central role of neoclassical economics in development theory and policy, and since it is a leitmotif of the volume to be disparaging of that role, if intellectual clarity and fair play had been goals of the editors, they might have included at least one contribution by a defender of the dominant neoclassical approach.

The editors and authors sometimes worry about the soundness of the “development” concept itself, suspecting that it implies that some conditions of life are better than others. Apparently they presume that were it not for the impositions of Western imperialist capitalists, folk in the less developed countries would actually prefer life to be nasty, brutish, and short.

Nonetheless, for a nonspecialist willing to dig through the jargon of epistemic nihilism, and the *de rigueur* sneers at market processes, the case studies presented here do sometimes provide interesting and useful background information. (I am less qualified to comment on their usefulness to a specialist in the history of development.)

One example is the essay by Michael Carter, the heterodox economist, in which he makes some stimulating comments on the changes in the theory and practice of economic development. He points out that at a time when practice has increasingly followed neoclassical market-oriented economics, one trend in economic theory has been to emphasize the variety of situations in which markets may “fail.” If, as Carter assumes, the Arrow–Debreu general equilibrium model is the “ideal” of a market process, then finding market failure is not hard.

But Carter neglects Joseph Schumpeter and others who criticize the market ideal assumed in the Arrow–Debreu model. Schumpeter criticizes neoclassical economics for ignoring the

dynamic “leap-frogging” competition that is most responsible for the new products and processes that are capitalism’s most striking benefit for the masses. To his credit, Carter does, however, point out that the policy credibility of mainstream Arrow–Debreu economics has been largely reduced to a mathematical model-generating parlor game in which “neoclassical theory can now be used to generate any result, support any ideological predilection” (p. 139).

Also enlightening is Kathryn Sikkink’s study of the Economic Commission of Latin America (ECLA) that shows how empirical evidence can change theories of development. In the 1950s and 1960s, led by Raúl Prebisch, ECLA advocated the perspective that “core” industrialized nations exploited less-developed “periphery” nations by taking their natural resources and giving them little in return. The policy implication was that the governments of less-developed nations should close their economies to outside investment and subsidize self-sufficient industrialization. In the 1980s, members of ECLA changed their theory and policy prescriptions because “ECLA specialists had trouble pointing to a single case in Latin America where their diagnosis and cure for poverty had led to growth and equity, whereas for all their revulsion at Chile’s repressive regime since the 1970s, they had to admit that it had achieved growth without inflation, as had East Asian countries whose strategies were as open to the world market as ECLA’s were resistant to it” (p. 21).

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