

# **SPACE AND DEVELOPMENT: a non-hegemonic view**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Development and time: the moment for a new approach?**

Global economic relations have witnessed during the last decade many decisive events: failures of the neoliberal economic policies in promoting development and redistribution, the financial crises in the developed world and a consistent growth of some peripheral nations. This context has also been the scenario of increasing relations between southern nations setting a new range of possibilities and questions to the debate about global development.

The growing commercial, economic and cultural exchanges between southern nations have open paths for new political alliances on the world stage and for a growing flow of information, experiences and knowledge. These new dialogs impose challenges to the traditional understanding of development as a process.

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There are many cases of south-south exchanges that have been transformed in formal institutions by governments. The IBSA trilateral dialog is one of these examples. Created in 2003 India, Brazil and South Africa established with the signing of the *Carta de Brasília*<sup>1</sup> a permanent dialog forum as a channel of exchange between the three regional powers.

This relation continues until the present date and addresses a variety of subjects through 16 thematic work groups<sup>2</sup>. Up to 2012 there has been seven IBSA summits<sup>3</sup>.

The IBSA dialog is within the boundaries of south-south cooperation, defined by the UNDP's Special Unit for South-south Cooperation in the following way:

The 2009 Nairobi outcome document sets forth the rationale, principles and key actors of South-South cooperation as follows: [...]South-South cooperation is a common endeavour of peoples and countries of the South, born out of shared experiences and sympathies, based on their common objectives and solidarity, and guided by, inter alia, the principles of respect for national sovereignty and ownership, free from any conditionalities. South-South cooperation should not be seen as official development assistance. It is a partnership among equals based on solidarity .... South-South cooperation embraces a multi-stakeholder approach, including non-governmental organizations,

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<sup>1</sup> The Declaration of Brasilia was signed into a letter of intent in June 2003

<sup>2</sup> The work groups are: Administração Pública; Administração Tributária e Aduaneira; Agricultura; Assentamentos Humanos; Ciência e Tecnologia (e Pesquisa Antártica); Comércio e Investimentos; Cultura; Defesa; Desenvolvimento Social; Educação; Energia; Meio Ambiente e Mudança Climática; Saúde; Sociedade da Informação; Transporte; e Turismo.

<sup>3</sup> The IBSA summits occurred on the following occasions 1st: March 5th, 2004, in New Delhi; 2nd: March 3rd, 2005, in Cape Town; 3rd: March 30th, 2006, in Rio de Janeiro; 4th: July 16th and 17th, 2007, in New Delhi; 5th: May 11th, 2008, in Somerset West; 6th: August 31st to September 1st, 2009, in Brasília and the 7th: March 8th, 2011, in New Delhi.

the private sector, civil society, academia and other actors that contribute to meeting development challenges and objectives in line with national development strategies and plans (resolution 64/222, annex, paras. 18- 19).’ (SSC – UNDP, 2012)<sup>4</sup>.

The enormous and imprecise definition used by the United Nations is an indicator of the diversity of these relations. Emergency of regional and international blocs, regional development banks, growing south-south commerce, are all contained under the idea of south-south cooperation even though these actions are individually very different in nature and purpose. Each of these particular relations has an individual narrative that could be analyzed in its internal specificity, history, context, relations and results.

What appears to unify these diverse initiatives is the nature of the actors involved. In other words, the presence and connections between those who are categorized as south constitute the most important aspect of the definition itself and is intricately related to development discourse.

(...) for two-thirds of the people on earth, this positive meaning of the word ‘development’ – profoundly rooted after two centuries of its social construction – is a reminder of what they are not (ESTEVA, 2010, p. 6).

Esteva points out the classificatory aspect of the idea of development. There are many other divisions that express the same will of classification related with the ideas of progress and development (center/periphery, Industrialized/non-industrialized nations etc). The changes in the global scenario posed by the

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<sup>4</sup> [http://ssc.undp.org/content/dam/ssc/documents/HLC%20Reports/Framework%20of%20Operational%20Guidelines\\_all%20languages/SSC%2017\\_3E.pdf](http://ssc.undp.org/content/dam/ssc/documents/HLC%20Reports/Framework%20of%20Operational%20Guidelines_all%20languages/SSC%2017_3E.pdf)

intensification of south-south relations leads to the necessity of discussing the epistemic basis these classifications.

El desarrollo es linealmente dialéctico: es una categoría ontológica primordial, particularmente en el caso de la Historia Mundial. Tiene, por otra parte, una dirección en el espacio: 'El movimiento de la Historia Universal va desde el este hasta el oeste. A Europa es el fin absoluto de la historia universal' (DUSSEL, 2001, p. 61).

Enrique Dussel's quote expresses two contradictions of the development discourse that are structural to the way mainstream hegemonic actors portray development: one opposes time and space and the other brings to light the dilemma between universality and coloniality.

Based on this context together with a critical theoretical approach this paper is divided in three parts. First it will focus on the contradictions expressed by Dussel as a path to present and criticize some epistemic aspects of mainstream development discourse. It will also present the growing importance of spatialization in the development thought in Latin America as an alternative to the mainstream analysis and finally reveal some preliminary results of the research that is being conducted under this perception.

## **APPROACHING DEVELOPMENT**

It is important to differentiate two levels of analysis that are present in Dussel's quote. First a broad view of development originated from the perception that society undergoes constant transformation. In this sense the idea of development is close to the concept of progress and describes history as a narrative of accumulation and change. The

approach gives to this constant movement an ontological character, a natural phenomenon that results from social relations themselves. In social sciences the ideas of progress and development are founded in the possibility of reading the sense, directions and characteristics of this movement.

A more strict view of development relates to plan interventions by international and national actors to change spaces and forms of economic organization. The main but not soul actor of this process has been national States whose material conditions and relations lead to actual development projects.

In this restrict sense, development cannot be seen as an action of any isolated State. Its logic is entirely based on comparative analysis influenced by power and economic relations between different national actors<sup>5</sup>. Social sciences or institutional knowledge is also an important factor to the development project once mainstream production of knowledge contributes to the modernization process and the belief in its goals.

At the same time development, in this frame, does not apply to all spaces. It's a term that describes a process that some actors have already accomplished and others are still in the path to achieve. As implied by Esteva, it's a debate about what some spaces are not.

Development, in this more restrict sense, when described by its hegemonic actors<sup>6</sup> seems to project an image of a linear,

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<sup>5</sup> Florestan Fernandes has already perceived this aspect of the development debate in the 1960ies. "tende-se a pensar o desenvolvimento como problema isolado, como se ele desse respeito a uma sociedade dada, considerada em um momento histórico particular. No entanto, em termos sociológicos, ele deve ser encarado através de um grupo de sociedades, que compartilhe um mesmo padrão de civilização, e as diferentes possibilidades que este oferece às sociedades que o compartilham para realizar um destino historicamente comum." (FERNANDES, 1968:166).

<sup>6</sup> "Mainstream development here refers to everyday development talk in developing countries, international institutions and development cooperation."(PIETERSE, 1998, p. 358)

progressive and predictable process that should be applied to non-developed spaces. This time based analysis submits different places to universal time or process of change.

This discourse constructed upon a universal timeline classifies spaces, determines the course of changes and points to a future represented by an idealized image of the western capitalist societies or in Dussel's words a path from east to west.

The division between north and south, based on the material conditions of the actors involved, has made the development dialog vertical. Developed countries (industrialized, center, first world, advanced) 'sharing/imposing' paths to other nations and regions (sub-developed, underdeveloped, periphery, third world) based on economic, military and knowledge hegemony.

To understand the epistemic basis for the development discourse and comparing nations it is important to highlight the importance of what Walter Mignolo calls *ethnic center* (MIGNOLO, 2003).

The Argentinian theorist argues that although scientific knowledge presents itself as a universal language it has to be understood through its cultural history and power. He exemplifies that by showing the contact between Chinese and western cartographies in the XVI century. Under the veil of a universal and objective reading of space the concentric Chinese maps were overcome together with its explicit ethnic center.

Ricci's territorial representation was more powerful than the Chinese on two accounts: first, because it went together with an economic and religious expansion that allowed Ricci to promote the European conception of the world in China while the Chinese were not in the position to promote their own territorial view to the Europeans; and second, because it produced the effect that the ethnic center was transcended and replaced by

a geometric one when, indeed, geometric projections during the sixteenth century became a new model of a Eurocentric conception of the world (MIGNOLO, 2003, p. 226).

A possible parallel can be made here: mainstream development is a cartographic discourse that classifies and maps actors in time and progress according to a group of supposedly universal values. Concurrently it points towards a given future based on a linear universal concept of history.

There have been many challenges to these ideas in social sciences originating debates about alternative development or even post-development thought. Samir Amin, from his Marxist post-colonial perspective, affirms that Universalist claims have a cultural origin or an ethnic centre. This contradicts the appearance of scientific objectivity that goes along with the development mainstream discourse.

Universalist claims are systematically combined with culturalist arguments, in this case Eurocentric ones, which invalidate the possible significance of the former (AMIN, 2009, p. 8).

Eurocentrism is a culturalist phenomenon in the sense that it assumes the existence of a irreducible distinct invariants that shapes the historical paths of different peoples. Eurocentrism is therefore anti-universalist, since its not interested in seeking possible general laws of human evolution. But it does present its self as universalist, fore it claims that imitation of the Western model by all peoples is the only solution to the challenges of our time (AMIN, 1989, p. VII).

Mapping spaces in a progressive time line is a colonial aspect of the development debate. As a discourse it preaches the possibility of universalizing the western development model. The biggest absence of this discourse is the importance of relations between actors, their agency and history to the construction of the developed world as it is configured today. The west is the ethnic center in the map of development because it is the source that emanates the parameters and images of future that constitute this discourse.

This way of conceptualizing development seems to present its historical process of making without some of the relations that actually allowed the developed world to accumulate so much wealth.

No one can miss the fact that in every instance – there is no exception – the direction of change found by the evolutionist was toward the specific set of qualities possessed by Western Europe alone’ (NISBET apud PIETERSE, 2010, p. 40).

It has been a long-standing post-colonial criticism of social thought that development of western nations is due to the material and symbolic interaction of the west with the rest of the world.

Through this lens western development is not an endogenous achievement. It is based in historical connections between the current developed and underdeveloped. The industrialized west does not represent a possible universal path but a particular history based on material and economic specificities and relations that have been historically unbalanced and hegemonized by the most powerful nations and characterized, among other names, colonialism and imperialism.

The mainstream development discourse reflects its ethnic center and its ethnocentrism but also gives the impression that

development is a path that all spaces can achieve when submitted to a set of formulas originated from the western development history. This line of thought ignores again the importance that western primitive accumulation is based on colonial exploitative relations and hegemony established with the rest of the world.

In resume, the attachment of development theory, specially the mainstream development theory, with this universalist timeline, a unified path to development through formulas that search for a fetishized model of western societies, constructs a image of common and possible future that is disconnected from a specific historical path. This approach is not the ideal theoretical framework to address properly the issues of diversity, democratization and alternative developments.

Criticism of this logic has come from many sides. In the South American development debate there has been an effort to diverge from this path of understanding. In epistemic terms this means the growing importance of spatialization metaphors and a focus on understanding the nature of the relations between development actors.

This can be already noticed in the passage from the industrialization/imperialist theories of the 1930s to the 1950s to the dependence theory of the 1960s and 70ies. Influenced by nationalist ideologies and governments in Latin America the imperialist school or the industrialist theories from the 1930, 1940 and 1950 represented by ISEB in Brazilian case and by the CEPAL in the wider Latin America context have advocated industrialization as a path for development (PEREIRA, 2012).

In broad terms they expressed the understanding that the colonial powers were the greatest barrier for development and advocated strong protectionist measures for peripheral countries.

These theories were still within the boundaries of a universalist time frame. Development was seen as linear and dependent on the replication of industrialization course that happened in the western societies. Although spatialization was still not a clear issue, the biggest challenge to development was seen as the hegemonized relations between industrialized and non-industrialized nations resulted from a colonialist past.

Breaking the path of underdevelopment was equivalent to escape domination and no longer have an economy based on non-manufactured exports.

In the 1960s and 1970s these ideas were challenged by the dependence theory. Writing in a bipolar power struggle between American capitalism and Soviet socialism they saw the local elites and its profitable connections with developed centers as a major challenge to change underdeveloped nations. Also the repetition of the European or western countries path was not perceived as possible.

To this Marxist perception the periphery of the developed world is seen as fundamental factor for the existence of capitalism itself. Development is announced as a process that under-developed nations could only join through a dependent relation.

The idea of a periphery attached to a developed and hegemonic center gives development a spatialized image where actors and relations between ex-colonies and wealthy capitalist countries is clearly represented. It's a map that exposes the ethnic center of its discourse through a cartography that opens hand of the timeline and a idealized future to expose hegemonies and the position of actors according to their distance to the ethnic center of development as a project, a process of change and knowledge.

Although dependence theory advances in the spatial metaphor of center and periphery in opposition to a universal path

of development and retains importance of the relation between actors as fundamental to understand development that was already present in imperialist theories it is limited to the comprehension of the vertical and hegemonized attachment between developed and underdeveloped nations. Also the main goals of development continued to be reproduction of life in the industrialized world.

### **How does south-south relations fit in this kind of map-making?**

To understand the growing south-south cooperation and its impacts for the development discourse it is necessary to go a step forward in the spatialization as an epistemic strategy.

Milton Santos in his works about global space offers the following quote:

considerado como uma todo o espaço é um teatro de fluxos com diferentes níveis, intensidades e orientações. Ha fluxos hegemônicos e hegemonzados, fluxos mais rápidos e eficazes e fluxos mais lentos. O espaço global é formado de todos os objetos e fluxos (SANTOS, 2008, p. 49).

We propose that mainstream development, agency and thought, is better represented as a hegemonic flux. It's a movement of change, that includes conception and actions, that has an ethnic origin and is sustained both by external and internal, institutionalized and non-institutionalized forces that impose a specific kind of change and objectives to development. The objects related to hegemonic nations and institutions are affected by this flux in different degrees according to their material conditions.

Development is not a linear movement in the universal history and can be more than a relation of dependence between center and periphery. It can be described as multiple hegemonic and non-hegemonic movements in space.

In this sense north-south dialog is a northern hegemonized relation and south-south development cooperation's a possible origin of non-hegemonic or, in some cases, counter-hegemonic movements or fluxes of change. That means fluxes of knowledge and change that are originated, performed and sustained by the relations between non-hegemonic actors and can point to different directions than mainstream movements.

The intensification of South-south relations and dialog present profound differences with other alternative development discourses, like the debate about sustainable development. This happens mainly because of the nature of the actors involved. Direct relations and knowledge exchange between peripheral actors create the possibility of diversity of sources and directions of change.

The idea of development as living-well (*Bem viver*) theory originated in Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador is an example of a movement originated from non-hegemonic south-south relations presents itself as an alternative experience of change. The possibility of multiple and diverse dialogs ultimately challenges the foundations of the hierarchical mainstream development discourse and its pretention of universality.

## **QUESTIONS TO THE IBSA TRILATERAL DIALOG**

What characteristics of development can be identified from south-south dialog? In what way this dialog actually differs from the hegemonic north-south flux of knowledge and change?

It would be contradictory to this epistemic path to express broad conclusions and characteristics about south-south dialog, exchanges and effects because the strength of these relations resides on the possibility of diversity that can originate from non-hegemonic dialog.

Although it is possible to characterize south-south relations as a general phenomenon based on the actors involved, each exchange between southern actors has to be understood in its specificity. Approaching development includes not only comprehending the actors involved but also understanding the way their dialog occurs, the flux of information, the effects generated and how this dialog connects or disconnects itself from the hegemonic paths to development.

This ongoing research about the IBSA trilateral dialog between India, Brazil and South Africa attempts to understand the way knowledge and policies for development are exchanged in a specific ongoing south-south relation.

Although multiple aspects compose the history of this dialog some are fundamental to comprehend IBSA dialog in a broad manner. First the actors that compose it retain some important similarities. Together with the fact that they are all ex-colonies and southern actors it is important to notice them as the major economies and leading democracy nations in their regional context.

These aspects permit certain equilibrium in their relations reinforced by the fact that the three nations are in different continents, condition that provides an absence of regional rivalry. This makes the IBSA dialog a different kind of south-south relation from many other southern exchange once it lacks a clear hegemonic partner.

Asymmetric south-south relations are common and could be exemplified by energy talks between Brazil and the smaller South

American countries like Paraguay and Bolivia – described by some authors as sub-imperialist, as well as the land grabbing by China in Africa (MARINI, 1977; PATNAIK, MOYO, 2011).

Another important aspect of this dialog is that the countries have similar development challenges especially on issues related to social development and inequality. That makes the exchanges about social policies one of the major points of debate together with the commerce.

Some questions have already arisen from the early stages of this research. Data gathered from interviews with participants of the IBSA dialog together with the analysis of the documents from the social development work group and general meetings point up till now to two research questions that connect with ongoing sociological debates.

a) The presence of mediators?

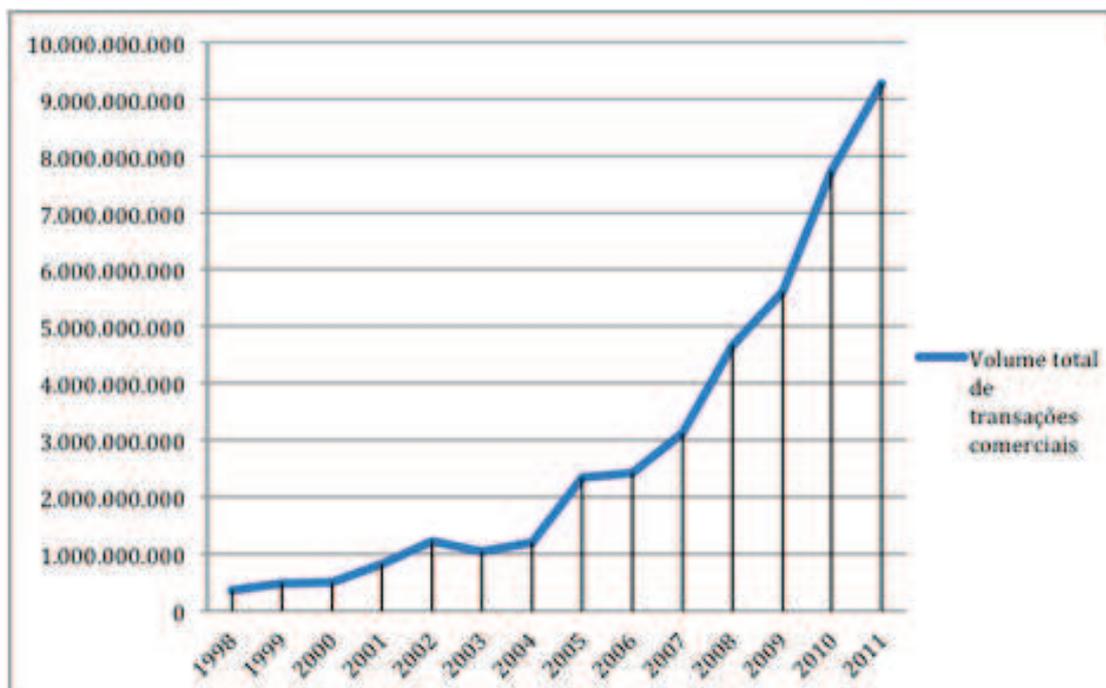
Mediators transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry. No matter how complicated an intermediary is, it may, for all practical purposes, count for just one— or even for nothing at all because it can be easily forgotten (LATOURET, 2005, p. 39).

The dialog between southern actors has been historically mediated by central hegemonic states and development agencies. In the case of India and Brazil relations have been mediated by England until 1991, but only in 2003 with IBSA that these talks grew in substance and importance (VIEIRA, 2007).

The consequences of the close dialog between the three nations since the signing of the *Carta de Brasilia* can be approached

through many paths. An example that can demonstrate such growth is the commerce exchange between India and Brazil countries. The graph below shows intense growth since 2003 and can be interpreted here as an indicator of the practical results of increasing of this south-south relation.

b) Sum of the total value of transactions between Brazil and India:



Source: Câmara do Comércio exterior do Brasil

The participants of the IBSA dialog interviewed for this research declare that one of the characteristics of this dialog is an absence of a hegemonic figure that mediates the talks between southern actors and makes it a focus point of this research.

Here we are not referring to simple arbitration of talks but the absence of a hegemonic actor that participate according to own interests. As Bruno Latour puts it the translator is more than a carrier of information it can diverge, resist, direct an interaction:

A mediator is not some sycophantic eunuch fanning its masters with palm-leaves, but always does new work of its own to shape the translation of forces from one point of reality to the next. Here as elsewhere, Latour's guiding maxim is to grant dignity even to the least grain of reality. Nothing is mere rubble to be used up or trampled by mightier actors. Nothing is a mere intermediary. Mediators speak, and other mediators resist (HERMAN, 2009, p. 15).

It is important in the context of this research to discuss profoundly this issue. Although the participants interviewed describe as one of the fundamental characteristics of the IBSA talks the absence of a hegemonic development mediator a great measure of influence of northern actors over the participants still remains. Understanding mediation or absence of it has become one of the key elements of this research.

c) Are south-south relations more horizontal?

Another recurrence in the interviews is that IBSA participants describe the dialogs as peer talks contrasting with the donor/receiver structure of north-south relations.

Boaventura de Souza Santos (2003) identifies what he calls ecology of knowledge as the possibility of exchange between peers without a hegemonic partner. The author is referring in his work to a possibility of exchange between traditional and modern knowledge as well as respect.

His concept of an epistemology from the south (SANTOS, 2009a) affirms that knowledge exchanges between the north and the south have been traditionally placing some kinds of knowledge in a higher hierarquical position according to the power of the origin of

the knowledge itself.

As there is no hegemonic partner and the exchanges are described as peer talks by the participants this has become another focus of this research that now aims to comprehend what kind of equality and horizontality can be perceived in the history of this dialog.

At this point an example can be pointed out: the case of the Zero Hunger program. This hunger alleviation program was designed and adopted in Brazil at the beginning of 2003 and subsequently watered down by the Brazilian government in 2005 in order to develop the current flagship public policy, the Bolsa Familia conditional Cash Transfer Program.

In 2011, the South African government decided to implement the zero hunger program indicating that the dialog between countries has been able to be a channel of public policy experiences. If Brazil represented a dominant partner the Zero Hunger program that was practically abandoned at its origin wouldn't be target of exchange.

## **CONCLUSION**

To conclude this paper presents two basic points. First it argues that spatialization is a valid strategy to approach development. It's an analysis that tries to map and understand the actors and the relations between them as central to understanding development when seen as multiple fluxes of change. Through this approach mainstream development can be seen as the hegemonic flux that has its origin in the northern actors but progress and change can also be the result of non-hegemonic relations and fluxes.

South-south relations can originate non-hegemonic fluxes of change and as these relations grow in intensity the more likely that these exchanges will challenge universal paths and models of

development.

Development can be no longer seen exclusively through the mainstream cartography of change once the intensification of south-south relations imposes more complex and diverse maps of development.

The second part tries to use this approach to begin to understand and present some preliminary results from an ongoing research about the IBSA trilateral Dialog that is being developed since 2010.

Two research questions have been identified through interviews and documental analysis and will be subject to further investigation: a) the absence of hegemonic partner and mediator and b) the idea of a more horizontal or peer talk kind of relation between the participants.

Understanding both points can contribute to the characterization of part of southern relations and development talks as they are being currently drawn.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The intensification of south-south cooperation imposes new challenges to the understanding of development. In contrast with hegemonic discourse and based on the on-going research about the IBSA Trilateral Dialog this text presents and discusses spatialized approach to development.

**KEYWORDS:** Development. South-South. Hegemony. IBSA.

## **RESUMO**

A intensificação da cooperação Sul-Sul impõe novos desafios para a compreensão do desenvolvimento. Em contraste com o discurso hegemônico e com base na investigação em curso sobre o Diálogo Trilateral do IBAS, este trabalho apresenta e discute uma abordagem espacializadas ao desenvolvimento.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Desenvolvimento. Sul-Sul. Hegemonia. IBAS.