



# Regional development and its impact on mexican society

## Desarrollo regional y su impacto en la sociedad mexicana

Verónica Vázquez Vidal<sup>1</sup>  , German Martínez Prats<sup>2</sup>  

### ABSTRACT

Addressing the challenge of regional development in Mexico, a priority for authorities and society requires a holistic integration of economic and social policies geared towards sustainability. This research focused on deliberating about the impact of regional development on Mexican culture, adopting a qualitative paradigm, and conducting an exploratory study through a robust documentary review guided by a scientometric analysis. Databases such as Google Scholar and ScienceDirect were accessed without language restrictions, using descriptors like 'regional development,' 'Mexican society,' 'impact of regional development,' 'regional problems,' and 'regional inequalities', covering the period from 2000 to 2022. The thematic lines identified in the research on regional development in Mexico emphasize the consolidation of public and social policies, the identification of regional problems with a particular focus on vulnerable groups and poverty in Latin America, and propose solutions to social inequalities through collective action and the promotion of local development

**Keywords:** social welfare, regional development, local development, public policies, regional inequality.

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<sup>1</sup>Universidad Interamericana para el Desarrollo. Tabasco, México.

<sup>2</sup>Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco. Tabasco, México.

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### RESUMEN

El enfrentamiento al desafío del desarrollo regional en México, que se erige como una prioridad para autoridades y sociedad, requiere una holística integración de políticas económicas y sociales orientadas hacia la sostenibilidad. Esta investigación se enfocó en deliberar en torno al impacto del desarrollo regional en la sociedad mexicana, adoptando un paradigma cualitativo y ejecutando un estudio exploratorio a través de una robusta revisión documental, guiada por un análisis cuantitativo. Se accedieron bases de datos como Google Académico y ScienceDirect sin restricciones lingüísticas, utilizando descriptores como "desarrollo regional", "sociedad mexicana", "impacto del desarrollo regional", "problemas regionales" y "desigualdades regionales", abarcando el período de 2000 a 2022. Las líneas temáticas identificadas en las investigaciones sobre desarrollo regional en México enfatizan la consolidación de políticas públicas y sociales, la identificación de problemas regionales con un enfoque particular en grupos vulnerables y pobreza en Latinoamérica, y proponen soluciones a las desigualdades sociales mediante la acción colectiva y el impulso al desarrollo local.

**Palabras clave:** bienestar social, desarrollo regional, desarrollo local, políticas públicas, desigualdad regional.

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## INTRODUCTION

Contemporaneity places regional development as an intricate challenge faced both by the authorities (Huyghe et al., 2021) and by society as a whole (Danielaini et al., 2019), orbiting the mission of capitalizing on potentialities sustainably (Deng et al., 2023; Fudge et al., 2021) and rectifying imbalances intrinsic to each region (Hoffman, 1977). Over the years, development has transcended its merely economic conception, adopting since the 1990s a palpably more social inclination (Nesterov et al., 2022; Zarycki, 2007), where the increase in social welfare and quality of life of populations has gained preeminence (Azis, 2020).

The cardinal discussion regarding regional development lies in the perception of "development" and whether it is



uniform for all regions, territories, and localities (Romero et al., 2022). Although definitions and interpretations of regional development vary in the literature (Azis, 2020; Fudge et al., 2021; Palekiene et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2022), there is general agreement on its significant impact on the economy and thus the nation as a whole. Regional development trends outline a vision of the future, grounded in analyzing varied dynamics and variables of regional impact by prevailing guidelines (González et al., 2022).

Achieving a robust and healthy regional economy is not a simple task; it requires the implementation of a series of instruments (Bian & Yeh, 2020; Kim, 2022; Popkova et al., 2020), such as policies aimed at social welfare (Marchewka, 2021; Wildman, 1990), the promotion of local actors for development and the strengthening of local organizations. Mobilization towards the most attractive regions is not only generated by economic factors and employment opportunities but also by the propensity of certain regions to be friendly and pleasant places to live, offering attractive cultural options (Martin et al., 2010).

The reform that embeds collective actions in our constitutional framework, resulting from increasingly intense social pressure from various civil society organizations (Gómez, 2014), and the imperative need to integrate economic and social policies in sustainable regional development, give rise to profound reflections regarding their impact on society. Consequently, the main objective of this text is to reflect on regional development and its impact on Mexican society.

## METHODS

The present study was framed within a qualitative paradigm, using an exploratory design (Woodgate, 2001), with the primary purpose of deepening reflections on regional development and its respective impact on society. An exhaustive documentary review was carried out, which was supported and strategically directed by a scientometric analysis.

In order to identify the main thematic lines to be explored, a bibliometric network map was constructed using the VOSviewer software, available at [<https://www.vosviewer.com/download>]. This tool made it possible to obtain the network of co-occurrence of keywords, providing a detailed overview of the most recurrent topics and their interrelationships. The database initially selected for this purpose was ScienceDirect, accessed through [<https://www.sciencedirect.com/>].

The thematic descriptors used in this exploration are detailed in table 1. The research identified, totaling 22 with no duplicates, was recorded from 1986 to 2021. One conference was excluded from the analysis due to the absence of authors. Subsequently, the frequencies of occurrence of the critical words were analyzed, which made it possible to define the main thematic lines dealt with in the research examined.

**Table 1.**  
*Thematic descriptors - identified production.*

Thematic descriptor	N	Time period
"Regional development" and "Mexican society"	8	2013 - 2017
"Regional development" and "Mexican society"	14	1986 - 2021
<b>Total</b>	22	1986 - 2021

N: number of items identified.

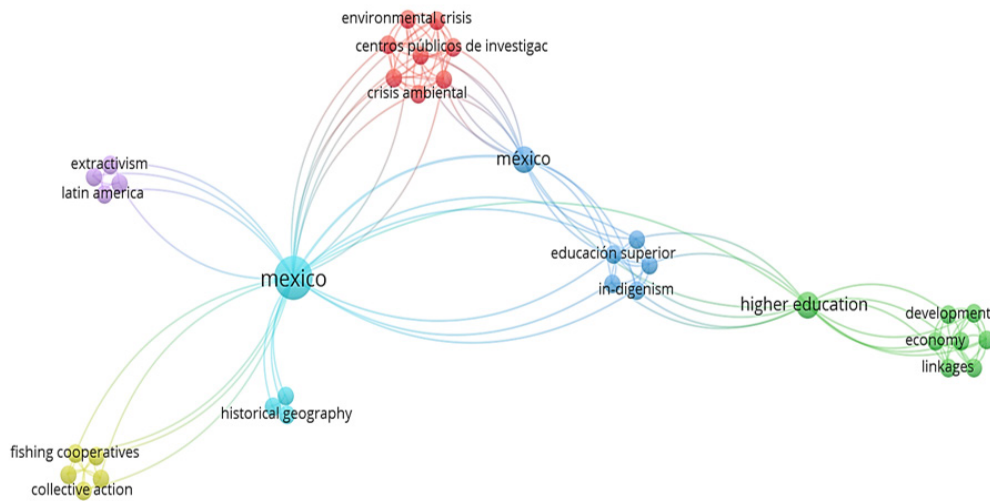
Source: own elaboration.

A bibliographic review was carried out to complement the lines found. The review was carried out in the following databases: Google Scholar and ScienceDirect, without language restriction. The thematic descriptors used were regional development, Mexican society, the impact of regional development, regional problems, regional inequalities, and their combinations with the Boolean indicators "AND" and "OR" in the period 2000 -2022.

## RESULTS

A keyword network map was generated from the processing of the files, illustrated in Figure 1. 35 primary items were identified and organized into six clusters. In this context, keywords that presented a co-occurrence level of 2 or higher ( $n \geq 2$ ) and their respective weight in the evaluated research were examined, as detailed in Table 2.

**Figure 1.**  
Network map of keyword co-occurrence.



Source: own elaboration.

The clusters generated in the figure above address:

1. Cluster 1 (n=8), red: focused on scientific production studies of sustainability in the face of environmental crises and their impact on sustainable development.
2. Cluster 2 (n=8), green: focused on studies of social and economic development mainly from recognizing the impact of higher education centers and the role of educational reforms.
3. Cluster 3 (n=6), blue: studies developed in Mexico related to social inequalities (indigenous communities and interculturality).
4. Cluster 4 (n=5), yellow: focused on neoliberal policy studies and the role of governance in regional development through cooperation and collective actions.
5. Cluster 5 (n=4), purple: studies focused on conflict resolution and critical resource policies and their influence on Latin American development.
6. Cluster 6 (n=4), blue-green: studies conducted in Mexico related to political power, historical geographic conditions, and state formation and development.

**Table 2.**

List of keywords

Keywords	Frequency	Weight
Mexico	7	44
Collective actions	3	48
Vulnerable groups	3	48
Poverty	3	27
Access to justice	2	32
Social rights	2	32
Democracy	2	18
Local government	2	18
Social development	2	18
Public policy	2	18

Source: own elaboration.

The main thematic lines were identified as follows:

- Regional development from the consolidation of public and social policies in Mexico.
- Identification of regional problems mainly focused on vulnerable groups and poverty in Latin America.

- Solutions to social inequalities from collective action and local development.

### Regional development: conceptualization and impact on society

A palpable theoretical gap surrounds the debate on the influence of economic development on regional (Fan & Zou, 2021) territorial and local environments (Guo et al., 2021; Merrell et al., 2022). Understanding the impact of regional development on a society involves, in the first instance, a deep assimilation of its concept and a meticulous disaggregation from the regional sphere to communities at the local level (Xu et al., 2022).

Regional development focuses on the sustainable progress of a specific region, being evaluated through economic (Caschili et al., 2015), social (Orejon-Sanchez et al., 2022; Williams & Nikijuluw, 2020) and environmental (Correia et al., 2022; Murakami et al., 2020) indicators. This phenomenon is characterized as a gradual change that permeates the state, territories, and localities through a causal relationship between quality of life and economic growth (Kupiec & Wojtowicz, 2022).

In parallel, local development, although sometimes ambiguously interpreted as the advancement of a lower territorial level (be it a municipality, county, etc.), is primarily focused on fostering development from the endogenous resources that each area possesses and that represent a potential for economic growth (Romão & Neuts, 2017; Tödting, 2020). In this regard, Vázquez (2000) summarizes local development through the following parameters:

- ✓ It should be the center of comprehensive development plans,
- ✓ It focuses on endogenous development at the territorial level,
- ✓ It should favor the sustainable development of wealth, democracy, and employment,
- ✓ It should base its management on the substitution of external technological capacity by
- ✓ The generation of innovative technologies to boost production systems.

Regional development is widely recognized as a transformative tool for communities, driving significant changes in social and economic well-being (Masse & Fenerci-Masse, 2022; Sogabe & Maki, 2022). This change, as argued by Rodrigues and Craig (2018) and Staroňová and Gajduschek (2016), can only be effectively instituted through state intervention and government management through the design and implementation of public policies. Crucially, these policies should incorporate communities in formulating comprehensive and collaborative solutions (Braiki et al., 2022; Svenfelt et al., 2019).

Policies that have proven to have a particularly notable impact include the development of social infrastructure aimed at mitigating inequalities between territories or regions (Lin et al., 2022; Putri et al., 2016) and strategies to reduce poverty, which, ideally, should employ collaborative actions to provide social support in the most disadvantaged communities and, in turn, require strong government commitment. This scenario raises several questions for researchers: Can regional development paradoxically generate problems related to poverty, unemployment, and productivity? This question highlights the intrinsic relationship between social and economic policies (Gritsenko & Efimova, 2020; Safarzyńska, 2013) in the context of sustainable regional development (see Figure 2)

**Figure 2.**  
Relationship between policy in sustainable regional development.



Source: own elaboration.

Note: the figure appears in its original language

Bernardo Kliksberg, a prominent economist, argued through his research that regional development in Latin America is overshadowed by marked socioeconomic contrasts, such as exclusion, malnutrition, unemployment, inequity, and social polarization (Kliksberg, 2007; López, 2016). Faced with this panorama, Kliksberg articulated several considerations, including criticism of the model of resource waste and its generalized impact on society, the need to focus efforts on educational reforms that promote human development and knowledge, and the imperative integration of economic and social policies aimed at sustainable development.

The comprehensive approach to regional development, which encompasses the totality of economic movements, entails the strategy of supporting macroeconomic adjustment through the management of technological innovation, as well as the promotion of increasingly intelligent and productive production systems at the local level (Rędzińska et al., 2022; Ríos-Carmenado et al., 2014; Zheng et al., 2021; Wei et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2023). In this line, the management and development of social projects that facilitate effective integration between government and society, thus ensuring the strengthening of territorial institutions and collaboration between actors in the social and economic sectors, emerges as a tangible opportunity.

Consistent with the above, Huerta (2020) emphasizes that the economic imbalance between territories exacerbates regional inequalities due to the concentration of economic, political, and monetary powers. By examining the contribution and share of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of various federal entities in Mexico, Huerta shows how inequalities are intensified by inefficient government action, the influence of powerful interest groups on public expenditures, and preferential budget cuts.

State-level economic performance also plays a crucial role in this distribution (Pike et al., 2010). The problem transcends simple equity or wealth distribution; it encompasses vast territorial imbalances that reciprocally and negatively impact the economy, inhibiting economic and social growth. Regional development is therefore configured as an instrument that, beyond economic and employment opportunities, encourages mobility to regions that are not only perceived as more attractive but also attract people because they are pleasant places to live and offer attractive cultural options (Martin et al., 2010).

## CONCLUSIONS

The keyword co-occurrence network study revealed prominent themes in research on regional development and its impact in Mexico, highlighting the consolidation of public and social policies, the identification of regional issues with a particular focus on vulnerable groups and poverty in Latin America, as well as the search for solutions to social inequalities through collective action and development at the local level.

This research provides a robust argument that establishes how regional development exerts a direct and palpable influence on generating social benefits, primarily by orchestrating collaborative economic policies. Through strategies that enhance productivity and revitalize returns, regional development not only enables the alleviation of poverty and social inequalities but also stands as a critical mechanism for addressing unemployment and economic disorganization issues.

It is imperative to recognize that regional development is a vehicle that, when managed with a comprehensive and multidimensional approach, is strategically positioned to respond to the challenges that emerge from intra-regional inequalities and social vulnerabilities. The sustainability of local and regional development strategies is crucial, and this requires meticulous consideration of various factors, including governance, citizen participation, resource allocation, and policy implementation, that are intrinsically aligned with each region's specific needs and contexts.

Future research could explore specific regional development models and their applicability in different socioeconomic and cultural contexts and critically evaluate existing policies and their effectiveness in promoting sustainable and equitable development. In addition, the study of specific cases where regional development policies have succeeded or failed to achieve their objectives could provide valuable and applicable lessons for formulating future strategies and policies.

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Conceptualization: Verónica Vázquez Vidal and German Martínez Prats.

Formal analysis: Verónica Vázquez Vidal and German Martínez Prats.

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Methodology: Verónica Vázquez Vidal and German Martínez Prats.

Writing - original draft: Verónica Vázquez Vidal and German Martínez Prats.

Writing - revision and editing: Verónica Vázquez Vidal and German Martínez Prats.