

THEORIZING THE RISE OF MICROENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN CARIBBEAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the world development agencies and governments promote micro-enterprise development as a solution to the employment crisis and penury of the global south. But what brought about the unprecedented expansion and worldwide promotion of micro-enterprise development? As a case study on micro-enterprise expansion in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, this paper offers a grounded theory analysis based on semi-structured interviews with national and international officials active in micro-enterprise development. Themes drawn from the interviews demonstrate that the failure of past development policies and the neo-liberal response to these failures help explain why micro-enterprise development expanded vastly in Trinidad and Tobago. Theoretically, I draw from Luxembourg's (1951) and Nash's (1990) studies on subsistence or petty production under capitalism and the world-systems analysis of households (Wallerstein and Scott 1992a; 1992b) to develop a conceptual framework for understanding the expansion of micro-enterprise development under neo-liberalism globally. In this era, micro-enterprise development reflects two separate strategies of dealing with economic crises—informal or unwaged work and government transfer or social safety nets—merged into one.