

‘Development’? Alternatives to ‘Development’?

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‘Development’ is multi-faced and multi-faceted: In Western style social science, the concept stands, since the 19th century, for a change in societies, their mode of production and technological level that follows a definite in pre-set pattern. This has resulted in inter-linked ideas about industrialised societies of Western Europe and North America standing at the cutting edge of evolution; that societies should be transformed, in ‘rational’ ways, on the basis of expert knowledge: that less developed national economies or states were facing ‘developmental backlogs’ and needed to catch up. Under colonialisms this line of thinking was applied to colonised society which, however, would now have to be ‘developed’ from the outside, rather than ‘developing’ out of themselves.

Since the mid-20th century, a field of experts, organisations, ministries and volunteers has coalesced around the buzzword of ‘development’, aiming to ‘develop regions and societies’ in the Global South. In this context, ‘development projects’ take on multiple forms, such as the construction of roads and dams or schools and hospitals, programmes to boost agricultural productivity, political participation or women’s literacy, measures to protect biodiversity or the distribution of contraceptives.

Since the close of the 20th century, critics of globalisation, feminist and decolonial movements as well as theoretical currents have advanced a critique of developmental thinking. This thinking is seen here as an ideology which presupposes Eurocentric standards, legitimises relations of domination, de-politicises inequality, construes societies as seemingly homogenous entities and obliterates transnational contexts of a colonial economic world system. A current now known as ‘Post-Development’ sees no longer a future for ‘development’ and calls for alternatives, to be found in the real world above all in the strategies of local, indigenous communities as well as in some grassroots movements in the Global South which militate against ‘development projects’. An immiserated impoverishment predicated on dependency on money and commodities is set against a frugal and sufficiency oriented way of living as a desirable alternative. The South American debate on ‘Buen Vivir’ has given prominence of this thinking, and similar concepts may be found in many places across the globe.

Nevertheless, despite all criticism ‘development’ remains, for most people in the Global South, their model image of a better future. People are by no means always of one mind how this future should look like: Government elites, indigenous people and plantation workers, aspiring IT entrepreneurs and street peddlers, World Bank managers and NGO activists certainly often do have quite diverse ideas about how a better society would look like and about how it might be achieved. In such contexts, ‘development’ talk frequently functions as a productive misunderstanding which shrouds from viewing social conflicts: Since many people relate positively to ‘development’, and all can fill this blank notion with goals desirable to themselves,

it can act as a common denominator to facilitate co-operation between actors who hold quite diverse 'ideas of development' or otherwise, ideas about social goals and interests. However, such co-operation will not be without its frictions. Some derive from such experiences their resolve to terminate talking about 'development'.

Yet if we decide to no longer talk about 'development', what then are our goals instead: a just mode of globalisation or local autonomy, a redistribution of wealth or the dismissal of capitalism, global public goods or a solidary and convivial world? How might the 'good life for all' look like? And are alternative concepts such as *Buen Vivir* or *Ubuntu* in their turn used in the legitimation of relations of dominance? How should we term the debates and struggles about directional change, positive social change and societal goals, which always involve, at the same time, political power, economic class relations, international relations and conflict?

In the envisioned issue of *PERIPHERIE* we would like to peruse the many faces and facets of 'development' and ask questions about possible alternatives to that 'development'. In this, it remains our concern to 'think the world from the margins'. Consequently, we are not only interested in diverse perspectives on theory, practice and critique, but we would like in particular to give voice and space to actors who belong, in the postcolonial capitalist world system, to the less privileged, to those who are pushed to the margins.

In order to be able to reflect a large range of perspectives, we would like to ask for comparatively brief comments of no more than 20,000 characters or about 3,000 words, and contributions from the Global South are particularly welcome. These essays will not be subjected to the usual external referee system but will be evaluated by the editorial board. All texts tendered in other languages will be translated into German. Besides, full-length papers (5-6,000 words) are also welcome and will be processed by the usual referee system after an initial evaluation by the editors.

For this special issue, we are interested in particular in the following topics:

- Multidimensional meanings of 'development' as a constructive opportunity.
- 'Development': of what? For whom? By whom?
- Subversive appropriation of hegemonic conceptions of 'development'
- The good life? Conceptualising alternatives to 'development'
- Translating, or the difficulty to translate indigenous concepts of a good social life
- Neo-colonialism by 'development projects', incapacitation by 'development experts'?
- Abolishing or transforming 'development co-operation'
- South-South co-operation as a decolonial strategy?
- International solidarity, social movements and power relations in civil societies
- Incoherence in Northern policies for the South: agriculture, trade, armaments, foreign relations, development policy
- Competition for 'development' on regional and national scales

The closing date for first drafts will be
4 September 2017.

Please direct manuscripts as well as questions about proposed contributions and any further inquiries to info@zeitschrift-peripherie.de. You can find our style sheet and further directions for authors on our website <http://www.zeitschrift-peripherie.de>.