

Summaries

Wolfram Schaffar & Aram Ziai: Reactionary Alternatives to “Development”? Vindicating Post-Development Concepts in Thailand and Iran. For about a quarter-century, the spectre of post-development has been haunting development theory. While classical post-development texts focused primarily on Mexico, Columbia, and India, and new debates on concepts like *buen vivir* look at Ecuador and Bolivia (see also *PERIPHERIE* Nr. 149), alternative concepts of good societies, drawing on non-western and anti-western traditions, can also be found in numerous other countries. This paper addresses two such examples which – different from the classical cases – are not primarily connected to left, progressive movements, but which are rather promoted by right-wing authoritarian governments: the case of sufficiency economy in Thailand and *gharbzadegi* – *occidentosis* in Iran. These examples seem to fit the thesis that post-development, in essence, is a reactionary, backward-oriented concept. We argue against this thesis. The aim of our contribution is twofold: We want to analyse the instrumentalisation of anti-western alternative development concepts through reactionary governments, and, at the same time, appreciate their original emancipatory impetus. After all, we aim to rehabilitate seemingly backward-oriented post-development concepts.

Sally Matthews: African Alternatives to Development. Ubuntu and the Post-Development Debate. In post-development theory, *ubuntu* is often cited as an example of an “alternative to development”. This article investigates whether *ubuntu* can play this role and what to think of the demand for alternatives to development in general. In order to do this, the paper first deals with central aspects of post-development theory and the debate about *ubuntu*. Although the concept fits well into a post-development perspective, the attempts to contrast *ubuntu* with Western ideas and ways of life are often fueled by the desire to rekindle an original, pre-colonial, authentic African philosophy. Yet discourses on Africa are always embedded in Western discourses, so this opposition reproduces precisely those dichotomies it aims to fight. More generally, this also holds true for the idea of “alternatives to development”, which postulate an essential opposition to “development”. This, however, denies claims for equal rights and participation at the root of demands for “development”. The struggle for these claims cannot be fought beyond the existing global order. Instead of engaging in romanticizing projections about an Africa beyond “development”, people’s views and needs should be taken as the starting point for the struggle against injustice and inequality.

Leonhard Praeg: Epistemologies of the South and the Spectre of the Empty Signifier. In this article I argue that a relatively unexplored fault-line runs through the discourse on “epistemologies of the South”. On the one side of this line, we find relatively well-articulated and, therefore, stable discourses, such as (neo-) Confucianism and *Ujamaa* – stable in the sense that their master trope or referent,

the writings of Confucius and the body of texts that theorised *Ujamaa* as African socialism, provide boundaries that, in a very productive sense of the word, limit their interpretative horizon. On the other side of the line, we find epistemologies, such as *buen vivir* and *ubuntu*, that are less stable, either because their meaning is not rooted in authorship or because, for a variety of complex reasons, they have not successfully made the transition from pre-colonial praxis to coherent and stable post-colonial philosophy. In the case of the latter, signifiers such as “buen vivir” and “ubuntu” are often dismissed as little more than “empty signifiers” (Laclau). In this article I argue against the reduction to empty signification, arguing, instead, that what we are presented with in these cases is an epistemological pluralism that is not fundamentally dissimilar from any other form of political pluralism.

Felix Anderl: Development as a Theme for Rule and Resistance. Coherence and Fragmentation in the Civil Society Policy Forum. This article reconstructs dominant and resistant appropriations of the theme of development. Departing from the various critiques of “development” and the calls for its death, the paper argues that influential critics of world economic organizations still use the theme of development in their advocacy. In order to assess this appropriation of development, the article ethnographically traces the encounter between dominant and resistant ways of staging development. Based on participant observation at the World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund’s Annual Meeting in 2016, the paper argues that the dominant staging of development is characterised by a projection of global coherence: “One World” shall be enhanced by one path to development. Resistant appropriations of development attack this projection of coherence. Empirically, the article shows that the resistant staging of development requires much greater justification and that the resistant actors, in effect, becoming fragmented into different camps. The coherent, stabilizing grammar of the institutions is characterised by universalism, which incorporates moderate parts of the resistance into its logic, and, hence, fragments the resistant movement.