

PERIPHERIE

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Lived Utopias – Alternative Visions of the Future and Development

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In the last two decades at the latest, Western-influenced development concepts have been (rightly) criticised for their hegemonic character, especially in the context of postdevelopment, so that the attention of research is increasingly focused on “alternative” ideas of a better future. Concepts such as “buen vivir” in Latin America or “ubuntu” in South Africa manifest the desire for alternative visions of the future, and so do so-called indigenous development concepts in Asia, which can be found in various parts of the global South and have been able to make themselves heard and in some cases have been recognised and even legally protected by state actors. At the same time, it must be noted that development concepts shaped by modernisation theory are still being applied, while not only international financial institutions, bilateral and multilateral donors, but also the states themselves ensure their dissemination and legitimisation – often without paying attention to the needs and interests of “their” citizens. Such development strategies, which are often associated with “neoliberalization”, in turn lead to the emergence of protesters. While on the one hand due to the supposed lack of alternatives to a capitalist economy a certain hopelessness is being felt, on the other hand we can observe that social movements are increasingly protesting against neoliberal economic policies and their social consequences. Diverse forms of resistance not only result in sometimes violent protests, but also give rise to discussions both within social movements as well as in a broader social context about alternative ideas of a “better life”. Beyond the general public, other social groups, organisations, communes, ecovillages and other forms of solidarity-based and sustainable economies are emerging in order to develop alternative ways of living, production methods and decision-making mechanisms. These are sometimes characterised by spiritual and religious ideas and have a long history, as illustrated by the “life reform” movements or communist colonies around the 19th century. These are no longer localised phenomena, or even limited to the Global South. Instead, we can observe that social movements and other social actors are networking on a transnational level and are conceiving visions of a better future on a global scale. Examples of this include current discussions about degrowth, sustainable consumption or the renunciation of imperial lifestyles, which are taking place in different parts of the world, albeit with different emphases.

With this call for papers, we want to address the possible (both theoretical-conceptual and methodological-methodological) significance of alternative futures and development concepts and their practice in so-called lived utopias. Therefore, both conceptual and

empirical contributions are required, which for example explore the relation between “old” and “new” conceptions of development or of the future, from an actor-oriented as well as from a structuralist perspective.

We would like contributions that deal with the following topics/questions:

- Which “new” and “old” ideas of the future and development, visions and utopias circulate in societies? What are the different spatial relations they exhibit?
- What is the relationship between visions of the future and utopias and the social “mainstream” and how are movement actors and other social groups that strive for alternatives socially integrated? To what extent are visions of the future “new” or “backward-looking”?
- Which notions of time and temporality are inherent in ideas, visions and lived utopias?
- Which practices and strategies are pursued by social actors in the pursuit of an alternative future?
- Which negotiation processes for visions of the future take place in transnational and translocal social spaces?
- How do the visions of the future relate to and interact with those of “classic” development actors, including the state? What new opportunities and limits of cooperation with companies (e.g. CSR, “green-washing”) arise?
- Which possibilities and limitations of adapting “successful” models elsewhere can be identified?
- The exploration of alternative visions of the future and development raises methodological questions, for example – in the context of postcolonial/decolonial debates – regarding the legitimacy of representations and the techniques that serve to produce them.

The editorial deadline for articles is
26 August 2024.

Please send manuscripts, consultations on possible contributions and other questions to info@zeitschrift-peripherie.de. Further information for authors can be available for download at <https://www.zeitschrift-peripherie.de>.