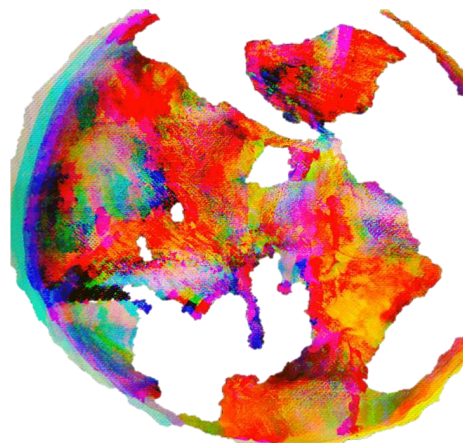**Working Papers**

**Development &
Postcolonial Studies**

Layers of Post-Development: De- and reconstructions in a world in which many worlds exist.

Julia Schöneberg

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Content

Layers of Post-Development: De- and reconstructions in a world in which many worlds exist

Julia Schöneberg[1]

Abstract

Post-Development as a critique of 'development' is almost as fuzzy and amoeba-shaped as the concept, discourse and practice it has long proclaimed as failed (Ziai 2015). While alternatives to 'development' have been called for, it remains unclear as to 'alternatives to what?' and 'what kind of alternatives' are in demand and by whom. The approach of this paper is to understand Post-Development as a set of theories, strategies and visions that all depart from a similar critique of 'development' as imperial and hegemonic construct based on a firm logic of coloniality, but that can take different shapes and be practiced on different layers according to various epistemological and ontological underpinnings. The analysis explores Buen Vivir, Ubuntu, Minobimaatisiiwin, Swaraj and Degrowth as practices of 'alternatives to development'. The discussion concludes by tentatively formulating preliminary characteristics that could frame visions of alternatives to 'development', allowing to situate alternative concepts, their means and ends on different levels and layers by specifically determining their core: whether they are concerned with improving 'development' interactions, with 'development' policy and economic strategies, with changes of the economic system or with philosophical foundations and relations to the non-human environment. The paper seeks to contribute to systematizing and categorizing Post-Development writings, laying a basis for further theorization of transitional discourses and practices more generally.

Keywords: post-development, pluriverse, alternatives to development, transitions

We can share a common 'No' to development,
but be open to thousands of 'Yeses':
the many paths people are following around the
world beyond development.

Gustavo Esteva

Post-Development (PD) is a theory, and like any theory it only insufficiently serves to account for all realities. In the academic debate, a variety of transitional imaginaries and practices have come to be labelled as PD. At the same time, many other practices could

be subsumed to it, but in their day-to-day are far removed from any abstract theory making.

The approach of this paper is to understand Post-Development as a set of theories and visions that all depart from a similar or even the same critique of 'development' as imperial and hegemonic construct, as I will explain below, but that can take different shapes and be practiced in different layers according to their epistemological and ontological underpinnings. The cover picture illustrates the idea of unfinished layers that are in constant and pluriversal de- and reconstruction processes.

Escobar (2020) proposes radical democracy, autonomy and interdependence as parts of political strategies and designs for pluriversal transitions. Beyond these pluriversal politics, other strategies, such as systemic contestations, social justice struggles and modernist/neoliberal policies can be at play. One and the same vision can incorporate several layers. As will become apparent, this is very much dependant on the question of on which layer political strategies are legitimized and on which layer they are practiced. The image of the several colourful layers seeks to illustrate this: the endeavour of thinking and acting beyond 'development' cannot be done in monochrome binaries or Manichean oppositions, but rather in colourful, plentiful and overlapping layers that are in constant flux, hybridisation, and contestation.

Writing this paper has become a journey of (un-)learning and exploring what is, was, and might become a world beyond 'development'. In a highly subjective way, guided by a critically reflective approach to my positionality as a researcher, a human, an earth-being, I have attempted travelling some of the many paths within the pluriverse as a visitor. Many of the territories through which these paths are leading are strange and unknown to me and almost ungraspable with the ontological frames I have been taught, although all are inevitably hybrids of several realities. In Escobar's words, thinking new thoughts requires "moving out of the epistemic space of Western social theory and into the epistemic configurations associated with the relational ontologies of worlds in struggle" (Escobar 2020, 70).

The journey of writing this paper has started in March 2020, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. There could not be a more timely, more urgent, more imperative momentum than this to think about alternatives *to* 'development' than at a time where a global pandemic has exposed itself most blatantly as a symptom of a much larger crisis.

The crisis of modernity, which is most obviously the crisis of a hyper-capitalist, extractive, oppressive, racist and patriarchal lifestyle and an imperialist world system that benefits few and produces a wide array of injustices, inequalities and destructions. The journey of this paper has been one of openness and critical reflection on the thousands of 'Yeses' and some of the 'Nos' as described by Esteva, and a non-conclusive exploration of how and where these many worlds might be overlapping and/or clashing. It has also been a realisation that the pure and untainted island of bliss is not existing, we are all creatures of the modern world. Nevertheless, not all is lost: there are plentiful pockets of resistance that are not only theorising on a better world, but also practicing it.

I am departing from my previous preoccupations with the field of Post-Development (PD) theory. Under PD, a broad variety of different concepts comes to be subsumed. Imaginaries and practices range from the well-known Buen Vivir to less prominent concepts like Gharbzadegi or Nkosuo. Most recently this has been highlighted by the "Pluriverse: Post-Development Dictionary" (2019). The "Dictionary" offers a broad variety of concepts, cosmovisions and practices showcasing the utopia of a "world in which many worlds fit" in contrast to western-propagated universalism. The editors make a distinction between "reformist solutions", merely aiming at universalizing the earth, and what they frame as "transformative initiatives", seeking to unfold a pluriverse of alternatives. While the alternatives described source from all parts of the world, they share fundamental commonalities as to what a good life and well-being entails: unity of human and non-human, community and interdependence, sovereignty and self-government. All of them critique the logic and impact of the Anthropocene, (neo)-extractivism and uncritical belief in euro-modernist ideologies of progress and growth. Alternatives in the "Dictionary" and beyond are presented as alternatives *to* 'development', but while the heterogeneity is part of their wealth and strength, it oftentimes remains unclear *what kind of* alternative and *to what* they propose. Are propositions formulating a critique of specific 'development' policies (e.g. sustainable development)? Is the concept contesting underlying (ideological) assumptions of 'development' (e.g. capitalist accumulation) and proposes different systemic models? Or does an ontological approach outline a different set of philosophical grounding, of making sense of the world, in contrast to the universalist and essentialist tenets of Eurocentric modernity that have been and continue to shape most that is understood as

'development'? The division in reformist and transformative strategies does not seem to do justice to the various complex contestations, and subscriptions, that are happening on different layers and levels.

So far, no consistent mapping has been carried out to systematize alternative propositions and to determine the means and aims of their contestations, their level of critique and the dimensions of alternative visions.

Taking original Post-Development writings (Sachs 1992, Escobar 1995, Rahnema and Bawtree 1997) and propositions made in the early days of Post-Development critique as point of departure, the first step is to decide which alternatives to concentrate on for further analysis. This is inevitably cursory but will help to identify main streams and common arguments. I made my selection guided by the following criteria: 1) representing concepts/philosophies/views from several continents; 2) drawing on imaginaries from the Post-Development literature, but also going beyond, 3) seeking out alternative formulations to the Euro-modern yardstick of what a 'good life'[2] entails.

A helpful frame for structuring and analysing the variety of alternative concepts is provided by Escobar's (2020) vision of *Pluriversal Politics*. This is complemented by Gudynas' (2018) *Critical Development Root Analysis Toolbox.* In sketching the toolbox, Gudynas identifies four levels of development critique, differing in conceptual depth and demands made. I merge both analytical grids and elaborate them further (*chapter 2*) to provide the theoretical framework of the analysis to follow. A second complementary axis is added through Ziai's (2004, 2019) differentiation of neo-populist and skeptical variants of Post-Development. Here, I am discussing the extension towards a post-anarchist variant.

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[2] 'Good life' is used here to emphasize the necessary shift of focus from the underlying rationalist and modernist assumptions of 'development' to 'alternatives *to* development'. This follows the assumption that these alternatives do not need to be invented or newly thought up – especially not by Western scholarship. Rather, and in the words of Dasgupta: "The alternative is already a reality and development is only trying to mutilate its structure. The logic that rejects development need not therefore produce a fool proof plan for an alternative society. Its aims are different. It is to provide the wherewithal necessary to 'protect' the economy and society that already exists in most of the world today, one that development seeks to undermine" (Dasgupta 1985, 7). Nevertheless, it must be stressed that this cannot mean an endeavour to uncover some kind of untainted traditional life, an obvious and justified critique raised towards the uncritical romanticization of so-called indigenous lives (Corbridge 1998).

The paper will conclude by tentatively formulating preliminary characteristics that could frame visions of alternatives *to* 'development', allowing to situate alternative concepts, their means and ends on different levels and layers by specifically determining their core: whether they are concerned with improving 'development' interactions, with 'development' policy and economic strategies, with changes of the economic system or with philosophical foundations and relations to the non-human environment. The story that follows hopes to contribute to systematizing and categorizing Post-Development writings, laying a basis for further theorization of transitional discourses and practices more generally.

1. On the intricacy of writing about 'development'[3]

Before I start my analysis, it is inevitable to clarify what is meant be the terms 'development' and, in turn, what 'alternatives *to* development' could mean. Writing about 'development' is only possible in inverted commas since the word, the concept, the practice has been (ab)used for such a broad variety of specific agendas, all of them structured by power hierarchies and asymmetries. Depending on *zeitgeist* fads, 'development' has been conceptualised within terms of growth, progress, neoliberalism, participation, empowerment, sustainability and much else. Eventually, 'development' has turned into what Gustavo Esteva calls an 'amoeba' term – one lacking any real meaning (Esteva 1992).

The commonality of all of these conceptions is that they rest on an intrinsic dichotomy of the 'West' and the 'Rest' (Hall 1992), the developed and the underdeveloped. Despite of much critique formulated towards 'classical' modernization theory, in many programmes, policies and interventions in the name of 'development' the inherent assumption remains until today: there are barriers to 'development' that can and must be removed. Closely connected is the assumption that there are those in possession of the solutions and those that need to be helped. Therefore, 'development' can be directed by intervention, as laid out in the notion of trusteeship (Cohen and

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[3] This paragraph rests in parts on a revised version of Schöneberg (2019): Development: a failed project
https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/development-failed-project/

Shenton 1995). In the same logic, the unwavering core of 'development' remains industrialisation and economic growth. The problem of 'un-(der)-development' is therefore one of resource allocation, measured with(in) economic indicators. The human and 'alternative development' turn in the 1980s has not fundamentally challenged nor changed this underlying model, despite an emphasis on participation and empowerment. The lack of theoretical foundation of alternative development has been criticized, as making them a mere collection of methods, a 'how to' of development (Nederveen Pieterse 1998) that continues to enact the mainstream paradigm only with closer consideration of social aspects. Admittedly, with the formulation of the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, the UN have attempted a more holistic view. Nevertheless, economic growth remains central in any definition attempted by the SDGs, despite the very obvious contradictions with ecology.

As a whole, 'development', despite its fuzziness and many failures, continues to be considered something good in itself, the only viable means to achieve a positive outcome. Critiques that point out an ever increasing gap between those owning most and those trying to make ends meet with less and less are dismissed. The conviction remains: if only 'development' would be practiced more participatorily, more inclusively, more empoweringly. If only 'development' would implement the better, the more efficient, the more technologically advanced solutions. If only more people would become consumers and producers in a world of hyper-capitalism. Then, poverty would be easily abolished.

1.1. The 'Post-Development school'

Defining the 'Post-Development school' is equally difficult (Ziai 2015). One reason is the heterogeneity of approaches and conceptions in various geographical contexts, another reason is that not all activism and resistance that argues along the lines of Post-Development scholarship may call itself by this name, or even be aware of the academic debate. While being cautious of the danger of exclusions that an exercise of mapping and categorising inevitably entails, I believe it will strengthen the arguments subsumed (knowing- or unknowingly) as PD to be articulated in a (nearly) coherent way.

There is no doubt that three main works have been pioneering in laying the groundworks of PD: 1) The Development Dictionary (Sachs 1992), 2) Encountering

Development (Escobar 1995) and 3) The Post-Development Reader (Rahnema and Bawtree 1997). Their commonality is the rejection of 'development' as a discourse, a practice, and a vision, that reaches far beyond criticism of 'development' limited to the post- WWII political project summoned by US president Truman. Rather, their critique is targeted towards the dominance and domination of an exclusively Euro-modernist capitalist ideal connected to progress and growth, installing Western societies as the yardstick for measuring development. Essentially, 'development' is employed as a term to prescribe, assumedly, desirable processes on non-Western societies, while at the same time serving to establish, stabilize and reproduce hegemony and control of the West over "the Rest." The authors make clear that in their understanding, neither economic, nor methodological issues are the root causes of persistent and increasing global inequalities, but rather asymmetries of power, ideology, representation. In drastic words, 'development' has failed and cannot, nor should it, be redeemed. Rather than refining 'development' approaches, which since the early 1990s has included participatory strategies (e.g. PRA), capability approaches, human-, sustainable-, and alternative development, alongside buzzwords such as (women's) empowerment and capacity building, the demand made by Post-Development is for radical alternatives *to* 'development'.

The scholars and activists who gathered around in the three above mentioned volumes were the first coining the label 'Post-Development', and those comfortable subsuming themselves under the term in an academic or scholar-activist debate. It can serve as a helpful guidance to take their writings, among those of a number of other thinkers (e.g. Nandy 1992; Apffel-Marglin and Marglin 1990, 1996; Rist 1997; Latouche 1993; Ferguson 1994; Esteva und Prakash 1998, Ziai 2007) as a starting point. Nevertheless, endeavouring to determine 'original' Post-Development body of thought defeats part of its purpose and demands: the claim that there is no one truth, no universalism, but rather a pluriverse of epistemological and ontological underpinnings determining how people and communities makes sense and shape their visions of a 'good life'. For the analysis unfolding in this paper, I will take the aforementioned writings as a point of departure, nevertheless, remain open to discover more that may not call itself the same, but formulates a similar vision.

1.2. Framing Post-Development critiques and alternatives to 'development'[4]

Despite being a heterogeneous body, there are at least five points essential to a Post-Development critique, that can be summed up in the following way.

- A core consensus across many PD texts is that neither economic, nor methodological issues are the root causes of persistent and increasing global inequalities, but rather **asymmetries of power, ideology, representation** (Escobar 1985, 1992; Esteva and Prakash 1997, 1998; Rahnema 1997; Sachs 1992).

- **'Development is a Western project of modernisation (Sachs 1992; Latouche 1991; Lummis 1993):** an exercise of ideological and economic power that results from a Western capitalist ideal framed as universal. The value system of the economy is enforced, at the same time devaluing other forms of social organisation and setting wealth and misery as antagonisms.

- **'Development' interaction as implementation of inequalities (Rahnema 1997):** The allegation is that 'development' is not only a Western construct to legitimize inequalities; international 'development' policy also serves to reinforce these and further dependencies. The most radical version of this thesis claims that essentially global poverty is an invention of the West, since the definition of poverty only works in opposition to a Western-defined yardstick.

- **'Development' as a hegemonic, historically produced discourse that serves to establish, stabilize and reproduce hegemony and control (Escobar 1995).** This control is enacted through a dispositif of actors, institutions and organisations (the 'development apparatus') establishing rules that must be followed and that defines who can speak, with what authority and according to what criteria of expertise.

- **'Development' as anti-politics machine (Ferguson 1994):** 'Development' depoliticizes questions of resource allocation, merely seeking technical solutions to technical problems. Language and practices used by 'development' experts influence the way in which 'development' is delivered, seeking "technical solutions to technical problems".

Figure 1: COMMON POINTS OF 'DEVELOPMENT' CRITIQUES BY POST-DEVELOPMENT PROPONENTS *(cf. Schöneberg 2016)*

For the purpose of this paper I refer to 'development' within the frames of critique formulated in *Figure 1*.

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[4] This paragraph is a revised and reworked version of parts of Schöneberg (2019): Development: a failed project
https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/development-failed-project/

THE MANY LAYERS OF PD ALTERNATIVES

The PD critique has become clear, but two vital questions remain as to what the critique proposes next: Alternatives *to what*? *What kind* of alternatives? If we assume alternatives *to* 'development', then which definition of 'development' do we take as point of departure? As with the critique, the body of alternatives proposed that could be subsumed as Post-Development alternatives is broad (Ziai 2015). In fact, PD can assume many faces in different conceptual and geographical contexts (Schöneberg/Haudenschild/Darvishi/Momeni/Ziai 2021, forthcoming), or, in other words be shaped in various "constellations of heterogeneous communitarian weavings that sustain life" (Gutiérrez Aguilar and Lohman 2015). Although this makes any endeavour to systematize PD a walk on unsteady, floating and changing terrain, it is not an arbitrary exercise.

As a starting point I take Escobar's propositions (1995, 215f), who has described Post-Development alternatives comprehensively as characterized by

- the rejection of the entire paradigm of development and the demand for radical alternatives **to** development in opposition to alternative development;
- an interest in local culture and knowledge;
- a critical stance towards established scientific discourses;
- and the defence and promotion of localized, pluralistic grassroots movements.

While this list is helpful in framing the subject of contestation – 'development' - especially in the context of it being such an amoeba term, Blaikie rightly notes that "rather than all manner of formal and informal institutions which also doing development" (Blaikie 2000, 1036), Escobar focusses predominantly on the formal apparatus claiming to implement 'development'.

To lay down what is meant by Post-Development alternatives *to* 'development' in this paper, and to broaden the frame towards contestations of the wider ideological project underlying 'development', the following list is formulated by way of a minimum common denominator of claims made by Post-Development proponents. Post-Development in that sense proposes:

- A fundamental questioning of core features of the prevalent 'development' discourse such as: the focus on economic growth, productivism, a rhetoric of progress, anthropocentrism, capitalism, rationalism, individualism.
- Alternatives to the Western homogenizing model and the dominance of a framing of development-as-progress in the spheres of knowledge, society, politics
- Counter-terms involving a multiplicity of systemic critiques and suggestions of different ways of living.

Figure 2: CORE CLAIMS MADE BY POST-DEVELOPMENT PROPONENTS

These three points will provide guidance when reviewing practical and practiced alternatives *to* 'development', and tracing endeavours of creating a "living beyond development" (Escobar 2020, 10).

1.3. Neo-populist and skeptical variants of Post-Development

The 'Post-Development school' has been criticized extensively (e.g. Corbridge 1998; Nederveen Pieterse 1998, 2000; Kiely 1999; Crewe and Harrison 1998) for its alleged failure to provide tangible alternatives to 'development'. Most prominent criticisms are the accusation of romanticizing poverty generally and the "noble savage" specifically, unquestioned glorification of tradition and an unanimous rejection of all things considered 'Western' culminating into reverse orientalism, a dichotomy of local/good vs. global/bad; and a lack of constructive alternatives (Schöneberg 2016; Sidaway 2007; Ziai 2004, 2007). While there have been elaborate rebuttals towards these accusations (e.g in Ziai 2007) reality is more nuanced than a dichotomous worldview, in either way, implies. "The core conflict that most Post-Development proponents respond to only insufficiently remains: How can and should alternatives be formulated that take a justified critical stance towards universalist yardsticks? How can they counter Eurocentrism and relations of power without dismissing demands for greater material equality at the global level? How can they avoid receding into traditionalist ideal types of pre-modern societies, at the same time failing to counteract deeply inscribed asymmetrical structures of capitalism and globalization that continue to maintain inequality and poverty?" (Ziai 2018).

Helpful orientation is provided through Ziai's (2004) broad differentiation of two

variants: anti-development (or neo-populist) and skeptical Post-Development. While the former rejects Western modernity altogether and essentializes an (oftentimes criticized as culturally relativist and romanticizing) model of vernacular and frugal communities, the latter is more differentiated in promoting an ideal society and is open to hybridizations. If we acknowledge that 'development' is political, then also alternatives *to* 'development' must be understood as political projects, as visions for re-structuring community and society. In line with Ziai's two Post-Development variants, these can be thought of as projects within bandwidth of reactionary populism and radical democracy, respectively. While the dichotomous differentiation between "neo-populist and skeptical Post-Development offers meaningful categories of analysis, the empirical reality does not neatly fit into these categories" (Ziai 2019, x). As a consequence, the mapping that follows will explore connections, but also distinct tropes of discourse, thereby determining whether the model needs to be expanded to accommodate hybridizations/specifications such as a possible post-anarchist extension sketched below.

1.4. A further clarification of variants: Anarchist Post-Development

The obvious weakness with much of Post-Development theorizing is its neglect of the state. It either assumes that PD alternatives cannot happen within the frames of a nation state, or it is simply not addressed. Anarchist theorizing is implicit in many PD propositions, yet most often not explicitly pronounced. In extending the variants described by Ziai (2004) I am proposing a clearer anarchist frame of PD.

Anarchist theory has experienced a renaissance in recent years, linked to the "disillusionment with Marxism as theoretical compass for the left, and the need to find new forms of radical politics in the face of conservative forces such as neoliberalism/neoconservatism" (Wald 2015, 625-626; also argued by Newman 2011a). While 'classical' anarchist theory has sometimes been criticised as a positivist discourse, more recent post-anarchist theorizing has attempted a synthesis of post-structuralist and classical anarchist thought, including post-colonial and radical feminist perspectives. Following post-structuralist assumptions that knowledge is constituted through power, and that no universal truth can exist, inevitably places the state with its claim to representation *ad absurdum,* but also critically scrutinizes constructivist

anarchist assumptions. At the heart of anarchist theorising and practice lies the endeavour for "abolishing domination and promoting equality through diverse structures of participatory democracy" (Wald 2015, 625). Wald (2015, 626-627) identifies three main pillars of anarchism: 1) *the struggle against domination*, 2) *direct action and prefigurative politics[5]* and *3) diversity and open-endedness.* The core, in a nutshell, is an outright rejection of the state as organizing and disciplining entity and an inseparable interconnectedness of liberty and equality that cannot be realised within these restrictive and restricting boundaries (Neusiedl 2019, 2) as well as the principles of self-organization, voluntary association and mutual aid (Graeber 2004, 3).

Connecting these pillars to Post-Development assumptions, it becomes clear that both are invoking an essential humanism, which, according to Newman is "subjugated by power, yet outside the order of power" (Newman 2001, 83). Following Foucault's deliberations on human subjectivity, Neusiedl points out that "seizing power from the bottom is often portrayed as an unproblematic way to build 'benign' alternatives. By adhering to a strong version of humanism, both classical anarchism and populist Post-Development erroneously assume that power is only exerted *upon* the bottom, but never *at* the bottom, and that power is always suppressive but never productive" [emphasis in original] (Neusiedl 2019, 2). The post-anarchist stance advocated by Saul Newman among others extends classical anarchist theory in carefully dissecting the intricacies of power/knowledge in close connection to sovereignty/autonomy. Discourse is contingent upon the governing episteme which makes it impossible to "formulate a universally valid, rational or normative discourse" (Koch 2011, 35) revealing the state as a power relation. A post-structuralist perspective on anarchism reformulates anarchist claims in such way that it demonstrates how "political oppression is linked to the larger cultural processes of knowledge production and cultural representation" (Koch 2011, 39). In that sense, post-anarchist theoretical grounding supports and substantiates demands of skeptical Post-Development. Departing from the assumption that radical democracy must be core in any vision of equality and justice, a "series of mobilizations and practices of emancipation, rather than a set of specific institutional arrangements"

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5 Direct Action and prefigurative politics speak to the essential anarchist project of 'building a new society in the shell of the old'. According to Graeber, "these who carry out direct action are insisting on their right to act as if they were already free" (Graeber 2009, 235).

with anarchism providing the "ultimate politico-ethical horizon for radical democracy" (Newman 2011a, 65).

There are three intersections of anarchist theory with skeptical PD that allow viewing it as (post-)anarchist intervention.

Firstly, the most obvious, is the suspicion and rejection of the nation state (Esteva 1995). Demands for autonomy and self-determination made by indigenous and decolonization movements are easily relatable to post-anarchist claims for anti-state politics and collective autonomy (Jeppesen 2011, 153).

Secondly, post-anarchism relates to post- and decolonial demands of unlearning. Jeppesen claims that each "anarchist text, event and debate challenges hegemonic cultural production through a reorganization of practices […] including social relationships that are anti-hierarchical and transformative, […] [and] the destabilization of binaries […] into heterogenous connected multiplicities " (Jeppesen 2011, 157-158). She characterises these practices as rhizomatic and interrelated, which is similar to the idea of pluriversal politics with its meshwork of heterogenous alternatives.

Thirdly, post-anarchist, similarly to Post-Development proponents, claim the urgent need for a new conceptualization of radical politics. Newman critically discusses "global capitalism" as a signifier operating through issues of "autonomy, working conditions, indigenous identity, human rights, the environment etc." (Newman 2011a, 47). Local and indigenous (minority) movements, foreseen in the PD vision, in their demands for autonomy are suspicious of the state(s) claiming to represent them, especially in terms of formal channels of representation where the state appears "as a hostile and unassailable force through which there can be no serious hope of emancipation" (Newman 2011a, 48). Newman claims that while reformist-minded activists lobby and negotiate compromises with the state, amongst the more "radical and anti-capitalist activists, the emphasis is on constructing autonomous political spaces which are outside the state, even while making demands upon it" (Newman 2011a, 48). These constructions reach beyond claims of sovereignty, rather demanding autonomy, in line with what Hannah Arendt famously quipped: "If men wish to be free, it is precisely sovereignty they must renounce" (Arendt 1960, 41).

This question directly connects to the question whether alternatives *to* 'development' can be imagined within a system that continuously recreates and upholds the 'development' apparatus as such. PD's call for alternatives *to* dominant modes of

structuring the economy, politics and knowledge is at its core anti-capitalist, and mostly anti-statist. Taking a (post-)anarchist lens on PD demands and contestations more explicitly politicizes the nexus of power/knowledge, sovereignty/autonomy, relationality/individualism and might prove helpful for framing the pluriverse in such way that it does not become relativist.

	Variants of PD		
relating to	populist (anti-development)	skeptical	post-anarchist
	Sharp critique of binary, Eurocentric worldview and relations of oppression and exploitation		
	Radical repudiation of development and modernity as such	"radical repudiation of the concept of development without necessarily condemning everything that has been given in the name of development" (Ziai 2004, 1054)	dissecting the intricacies of power/knowledge in relation to sovereignty/autonomy
	static, reified concept of traditional culture	constructivist, anti-essentialist view on cultures	Critical view on power asserted *on* the bottom, but also *at* the bottom
	conservative or reactionary anti-modern populism	radical democratic, potentially emancipatory, beyond the state	
development	a virus undermining the people's immune system i.e. their traditional culture	"There are numerous ways of living a 'good life' and it is up to each society to invent its own" (Rist 1997, 241). ->manifesto of radical democracy in the field of 'development' policy and theory	
culture	assumption of cultural pureness	radical pluriversality	
knowledge	enlightened authoritarianism (Rahnema 1997)	principle of epistemological presentation (regardless of external or internal actors) is challenged	"political oppression is linked to the larger cultural processes of knowledge production and cultural representation" (Koch 2011, 39).
representation	Possible	not possible	
state	accommodates nationalism with racist undertones	existing democratic structures seen as inadequate, not democratic enough critique of system of political representation, not limited to polity and politics, but including epistemological and economic structures political, economic, epistemological decentralization	autonomous political spaces which are outside the state, even while making demands upon it

Figure 3: VARIANTS OF POST-DEVELOPMENT (ADAPTED AND EXPANDED FROM ZIAI 2004

2. Layers of 'development' critique: Framework for analyses

In careful consideration of the fact that not all aspects and forms of knowledge can and should be categorised or even grasped by categories, analysing 'development' critique, and, more importantly, alternative propositions, is helped by formulating a framework for analysis. As a guiding framework for this analysis I will draw on the three-layered typology proposed by Escobar (2020).

Escobar (2020) differentiates between pluriversal politics and modernist forms of politics. If we assume that moving beyond 'development', i.e. towards Post-Development, means to move towards a pluriversal worldview, it also means abandoning modernist frames. These are essentially shaped by "ontologies that are deeply embedded in the negation of full humanity of multiple others and the non-human" (Escobar 2020, xiv). Specifically, this applies to a Euro-modern universalist worldview that does not only take the 'West' as a yardstick for what is deemed 'developed', thereby legitimising imperial modes of living. It is also entangled with deeply racist and embodied classifications of humanity.

Pluriversal politics are radically relational. Escobar frames them as a non-dualist, non-Cartesian way of viewing the world. In this regard, the most succinct definition of the term 'pluriverse' is offered by the Zapatistas of Chiapas: they imagine a "world in which many worlds fit" rather than succumbing to the homogenizing endeavour of globalization seeking to make all worlds fit into one. While modernist politics can contribute to pluriversal politics through struggles for "economic democratization, for depatriarchalization and the end of racism and homophobia, for environmental justice" (Escobar 2020, xv), they can also reproduce and strengthen the inequities and injustices they seek to address by maintaining (ontological) structures of separation. To evaluate alternative strategies and identify those that may be productive towards what Escobar calls 'pluriversal politics' I will draw on Escobar's layered typology of forms of politics.

Post-Development has been formulated as a critique of 'development'. Yet, as emphasized above, 'development' is ambiguous. The table below is helpful in locating the aim of critique and alternatives proposed. It will provide guidance in determining whether arguments formulate a critique of 'development' as a project of Western modernity and dominance, of 'development' as capitalism, economy and endless growth, or of modern industrial societies, and the multiple nuances and layers in-between.

Figure 4: LAYERS OF (POST-)DEVELOPMENT POLITICS (ADAPTED AND EXPANDED FROM ESCOBAR 2020 AND GUDYNAS 2018)

Layer	Typical Actors	Core Assumptions	Strategies	Type of politics
1st layer: political strategies and designs conducted in the name of **progress and the improvement of people's conditions**	(neo-liberal) governments, WB, mainstream NGOs	taking for granted the dominant world such as markets, productivity, individualism, need for economic growth	objective of making instruments more efficient, evaluation of differences between expected and obtained results (in promoting growth, generating employment, improving conditions of specifically targeted population)	modernist
2nd layer: political strategies and designs in the name of **social justice**	social movements, progressive development NGOs, alliances of NGOs and social movements	embraces human rights (including gender, sexual, ethnic diversity), centrality of human needs and reduction of inequalities	alternative development, human development, sustainable development mitigation of inequalities within frames of development dispositif, licensed freedoms (Manji 2014) reframing dev as field of social struggle and political engagement (repoliticizing)(McKinnon 2007)	liberal/social democratic modernism
3rd layer: political strategies in the name of **systemic contestations**	social movements, some unions, some governments, critical scholars	questioning development as discourse and ideology within capitalist development frames	bringing about social justice, and overcoming inequalities through systemic change, contentious politics, representation, intersectional politics (race, class, gender). rethinking development through the idea of hegemonic struggle, emancipatory freedoms (Manji 2014)	(radical) left modernism
4th layer: political strategies and designs in the name of **pluriversal transitions**	autonomous collectives in GN and GS, social movements, critical scholars	Rejection of development paradigm as discourse, ideology and practice within capitalist development frames, questioning of universal worldview,	Non-Cartesian worldview, focus on local culture and knowledge, defence, and promotion of localized, pluralistic grassroots movements, radical democracy, radical interdependence, emphasis of autonomy, care-conservation axis (Gutiérrez Aguilar 2017), contextuality, spatial-temporal-harmonious-totality of existence (Walsh 2010), communal solidarity, interdependence of human and non-human, conviviality	pluriversal

3. The difficulty of re-searching Post-Development: A few words on positionality

I will move along in heuristic circles between, non-conclusive, attempts of mapping, and engagements with non-modern, non-Western cosmovisions, lived and practiced alternatives. It is inevitable that at this stage, my grasp of non-European worldviews included in the alternatives mapped can only remain patchy to that extent that openness and self-reflexivity allow me to move beyond my established frames of thinking. This has two major implications for research on and of Post-Development, that are rooted in the intricacies of how knowledges are created, what is considered relevant knowledge, and who has expert voice.

First, there are limits as to "how far [Indigenous Knowledge] can be comprehended from a Eurocentric point of view" (Ahenakew 2006, 327). Being aware of this, the process of research will have to be one of translation, of careful exploration as to what extent Indigenous knowledges are at all intelligible for Western-educated *white* researchers, where and for whom they are applicable and how much we can learn and translate without being neither relativist nor co-opting of imaginaries that are not our own.

Secondly, the call and desire for alternatives results from the many crises we are facing: increasing inequalities, poverty, racism, discrimination, ecological destruction. The difficulty in this call is that it is not quite clear alternatives to what are sought. The call for 'alternatives *to* development' allows for a broad variety of critiques, reforms, transformations as becomes visible in Escobar's/Gudynas' frameworks. Mendoza points to the dangers of making non-modern concepts utilisable for modern problems: rather than moving beyond the dominance of Northern epistemologies a sudden focus and superficial acknowledgement of non-Western knowledges is merely exploited to "imagine futurity" (Mendoza 2018, 117) for oneself. Suddenly the subaltern, having needed redemption for so long, is ascribed the role of saviour. The problem with this is, that far from acknowledging and countering epistemic violence and historical complicity, the process remains dependant on the question of who defines what part or element of the "indigenous knowledge" is deemed desirable or relevant to contribute to the rescue. We need to be careful not to instrumentalize "indigenous knowing and being in research" (Ahenakew 2006, 337) or fall

prey to intellectual extractivism by mining non-Western knowledges to solve the crises of modernity (Mendoza 2018, 119). Hunt asserts that "indigeneity is not just an idea [...] [it] is lived, practiced, and relational. Yet indigenous knowledge is rarely seen as legitimate on its own terms, but must be negotiated in relation to pre-established modes of inquiry" (Hunt 2014, 29).

At the same time 'indigenous' can also become a problematic term if understood as a homogenous untainted normatively good. The differentiation between modern and non-modern is arbitrary to a large extend since there simply is nothing and no-one that has remained entirely untouched by modernity. 'Indigenous' should by no means be understood as some kind of traditionally dyed essence of living better, especially since the myriads of traditions and practices worldwide differ and can also take very destructive, hierarchical, patriarchal, racist, sexist and nationalist shapes. Traditions, transmissions and culturally rooted concepts of society, politics and knowledge hold important truths, but are certainly no "timeless models of unchanging truths that require unwavering defence and unquestioning obedience" (Borrows 2016, 4). Nevertheless, the varieties of alternatives *to* 'development' that do exist show that there certainly are emancipatory and radically different ways of thought and action contrary to Western monolithic modernist claims.

The endeavour of exploring variants and visions of Post-Development around the world is essentially one of trying to outline the possibilities of the pluriverse, the wealth beyond the monoculture of knowledge and being that universalism has taught us. However, we must be careful not to, in Ahenakew's words, simply engraft Indigenous knowledges into non-Indigenous ways of being. If the environment of doing so remains unchanged and defined by the dominant, there is the danger that it "does not happen as a mutual exercise, but as assimilation" (Ahenakew 2006, 324). In writing this paper, I recognize that I am attempting to gather insights that are (possibly) beyond my own ontological grasps of living and relating, and that I do so by following a method, that of desk research, that can only insufficiently do justice to the interwovenness and practicality of lived, experienced, and oral imaginaries. This is one of the major limitations of my paper.

Despite of the apparent pitfalls I believe that a closer look at the concepts and lived alternatives that make up the pluriverse is important and productive, as "the nature of

alternatives as a research question and a social practice can be most fruitfully gleaned from the specific manifestations of such alternatives in concrete local settings" (Escobar 1995, 223). Unlike the claims to universalism that the Western 'development' paradigm has made, the values attached (progress, growth, rationality, rule over nature) do not make sense for many peoples and communities. And it is precisely these values that need to be questioned to counter the multiple crises we are facing (Latouche 2001).

4. Varieties of Post-Development: Collecting pluriversal proposals

Having laid out that Post-Development can assume many faces and shapes in different conceptual and geographical contexts, I will now explore views on society, community and a good life from several parts of the world. I will delve into concrete experiences and practices and attempt responding to the question as to 'alternatives *to what*' the imaginaries might offer. Due to the limitation of space I will focus on five propositions here: Buen Vivir, Botho/Ubuntu, Swaraj, Minobimaatisiiwin/ Mino bimaadiziwin, and Degrowth. The attached glossary will offer insight in further imaginaries. The selection is made guided by the following criteria: 1) representing concepts/philosophies/views from different continents; 2) drawing on imaginaries from the Post-Development literature, but also going beyond, 3) seeking out alternative formulations to the Euro-modern yardstick of what a "good life" entails. The discussion below will detail how each proposition speaks to what could be understood as an alternative *to* 'development'

4.1. Buen Vivir

Writing about Buen Vivir (BV) is difficult as the term refers both to several heterogenous indigenous worldviews as well as to political projects by governments in South American countries that are widely viewed as progressive. These political projects may partly, but not necessarily fully overlap with the more abstract formulation of worldviews. Looking at *figure 4* there might be strategies that are justified on one level, put enacted on another. Taking a closer look at Buen Vivir showcases the pitfalls that Post-Development in practice entails, especially within frames of a nation state.

The following section will explore in what ways Buen Vivir speaks to Post-Development demands and which layers of political strategies (cf. *figure 4*) come into play interweaving communal and institutional levels of argumentation and implementation.

Buen Vivir is a concept, or rather a set of cosmologies, originating from indigenous peoples in Abya Yala. It has gained broader momentum and entered political debates since the early

2000s. Buen Vivir is widely referenced as a role model for shaping a "good life" politically, not least because it was implemented into the constitutions of Ecuador (2008) and Bolivia (2009), following a period of social and grassroots mobilisation and protests against neoliberal government politics. Due to its contextual nature it is neither possible nor desirable to formulate a single definition of Buen Vivir. Thought about in the plural, forms of Buen Vivir[6] share a common vision and can provide a platform hosting alternative and critical sets of attempts to "build other social and economic orders that break free from the bounds imposed by modernity" (Gudynas 2013, 35). Buen Vivir serves to unite concepts that have in common that they fundamentally question the established model of 'development' and seek to bring about a radically different, harmonious, relationship between human and Nature (Gudynas 2012, 19; Walsh 2010; also see *figure 2*).[7]

Commonly subsumed under Buen Vivir are the Quechua *Sumak Kawsay*, the Aymara Suma *Qamaña*, the Guarani *Nande Reko*, the Shiir Waras *Ashuar* and the Mapuche *Küme Morgen* (Vanhulst and Beling 2014, 3; Merino 2016, 6). Each of these conceptions is "linked to a people, to a territory, to a specific social and cultural system" (Monni and Pallotino 2015, 186). Translations to Spanish or English are insufficient and prone to losing their tacit meaning (Huanacuni 2010, 35). While being cautious not to homogenize the highly contextualised visions and being aware that complex ontological frames cannot be reduced to a simple list, it can be cautiously said that all of them "broadly converge on the idea of living in plenitude, in a state of permanent respect, harmony and balance between the individual, society and the cycles of nature" (Merino 2016, 6). Buen Vivir formulate conditions for "living well", contrasting the 'development' promise of "living better" (Waldmüller 2015).

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[6] While being fully aware that there is no one homogenous Buen Vivir I am using the term not to homogenize, but to group a set of epistemologies that share fundamental commonalities.

[7] Many indigenous cosmologies view Nature and non-human beings as subjects, as persons. In seeking to write respectfully about personhood within these cosmologies, that are fundamentally contesting human exceptionalism, I use capitalization (also see Wall Kimmerer 2013, 385).

How does Buen Vivir relate to Post-Development?

Due to the specific history of South America shaped by conquest, colonization, neoliberal intervention and extractivism, alternatives are not necessarily transferable or applicable to other contexts, which does not mean that aspects cannot be read as Post-Development strategy. Referring to the list of Post-Development characteristics and 'development' critique formulated by PD proponents (*figures 1 and 2*) there are obvious overlaps of PD with the indigenous discourses around BV.

BV originates from localised contextualised settings. They emphasize local culture and knowledge and assign special value to localized communities. BV are endogenous articulations of needs that are specific to a "particular culture, language, history and social and political context" (Gudynas 2011, as cited in Deneulin 2012, 3). The concepts subsumed as Buen Vivir formulate an understanding of politics, society and community that is fundamentally in opposition to the Euro-modern project of 'development' and its 'single story' of linear progress and growth. Beyond the Western idea of advancement, BV encompasses elemental questions of existence such as how persons relate to other human and non-human beings (Gudynas 2012, 6). Quite in contrast to the universal mono-cultural 'development' project, BV's core is its plurality and contextuality. Needs remain central but can only be formulated for a community, not individually, and within an understanding of time that simultaneously encompasses future, present, and past (Deneulin 2012, 3). In that context, a frugal life can be imagined in various ways. Buen Vivir stresses a life in plenitude, which is not exclusively connected to material well-being. In emphasising that social relations cannot be reduced to the exchange of material goods, BV provides an alternative vision to affluence and prosperity that encompasses a more holistic vision of well-being, spirituality, and happiness (Gudynas 2012, 30). While the individual is part of community, communal wellbeing is the reference point for a good life (Chassagne 2018, 13). BV views nature, *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) and non-human beings as subjects that have equal rights to human and whose needs and well-being are inextricably interlinked. Without a harmonious relationship well-being is not possible for neither (Huanacuni 2010, 32). This marks a fundamental break with the anthropocentric rationale of 'development' (including sustainable 'development') (Gudynas 2012, 8).

BV seeks to break with the project of modernity, not only intellectually and epistemically, but also practically (Gudynas 2012, 20). Two shapes of Buen Vivir have been translated into a political agenda. The Ecuadorian constitution rests on the Kichwa *Sumak Kawsay*, while the Bolivian political project refers to the Aymara *Suma Qamaña* (Chassagne 2018, 4).

The political implementation of BV as a non-Western model of "beyond-development" takes place within tensions of past and present of an extractive political economy, ongoing social-environmental struggles and protests that have (re)-surfaced a set of interlinked critical debates on "concepts of progress, views on nature, the role of indigenous peoples in the construction of national and continental identities" (Svampa 2013, 121).

The 2009 Bolivian constitution takes the idea of plurality, which is at the core of BV, to the executive realm and legally implements plurinationality. In contrast to a multicultural state, which "recognises the social and political rights of diverse peoples" within one single unitarian state, the plurinational state conceives of different peoples as distinct nations thereby acknowledging the autonomy of indigenous peoples (Galindo 2010, as cited in Merino 2016, 6). The 2008 Ecuadorian constitution rests on the formulation of fundamental rights for both human and non-human beings that are constitutionally implemented (Merino 2016, 4). *Sumak Kawsay*, living well, is recognised as a right in itself. These actions are, at least theoretically, part of **pluriversal political strategies** (*cf. figure 4*) as they are promoted in the name of pluralizing modernity (rejecting Western paradigms of development, promoting plurality from the grassroots), or overcoming it (rejection of Cartesian dualism, Nature as being, emphasis of collective autonomy). In both countries, political strategies for implementation have included an increase in social welfare and redistribution policies, that can be viewed as **social justice politics** within the realm of liberal-social democratic modernism (Merino 2016, 6). In general, and despite of claims of respecting autonomy, politics are implemented top-down from a central government (Galindo 2010, as cited in Merino 2016, 4). Indigenous peoples have the right to be consulted but hold no veto power. In Ecuador, a 20-year National Plan for Good Living formulates the aim and intention to transition from a capitalist to a solidarity market

economy (Merino 2016, 10). In this type of **systemic politics**, the state assumes responsibility for the pursuit of a good living for all, claims power of representation, and pledges transition from neoliberal 'development' to a Buen Vivir. This has been described as Buen Vivir Socialism, since core pillars are social redistribution, democratization of means of production and progressive taxation (Merino 2016, 3; Vanhulst and Beling 2014, 57). In practice, this strategy has turned out problematic. While it is claimed that the neo-extractivist strategy is only the means to transition and not the end, the state continues to dominate natural resources and maintains an economy that is oriented towards export-led growth based on extraction. While the claim of these political strategies has been made towards the layers of **systemic and pluriversal politics**, recent years have, quite in the contrary, shown a flip towards **modernist politics**. Rather than overcoming logics of modernity, political strategies are complying as they continue to subscribe to the need for growth and markets, embracing the focus on individual rather than collective needs with a 'strong individualist orientation that remains rooted in human development' (Merino 2016, 4). Practically this has translated into authoritarian government actions, oppression, and severe human rights violations against protesters – paradoxically, all in the name of alternatives *to* Western-imposed 'development'. Indigenous communities, rather than enjoying autonomy, remain under constant threat of dispossession in the name of national interest (Merino 2016, 4).

Having started off ambitiously to counter the universalising mission of Euro-modern development, the practical implementation of Buen Vivir has experienced a reality check between *Realpolitik* and vision and has, rather than as a PD in practice, ended up with a leftist neo-developmentalism firmly rooted in a modernist episteme. In opposition to the envisaged radical democracy, we observe states that maintain centralised power, both politically as well as economically (Kothari et al. 2014, 11). They continue, despite legal recognition of rights, to exploit Nature, thereby enforcing rather than contesting 'development'.

In responding to the question as to how far BV can be considered a Post-Development or pluriversal vision, the response is twofold: in their ideological formulation the many variants of BV are built on relational epistemologies that are in fundamental contrast to core pillars of dualist modernity. They are rejecting "divides between nature and culture, us and them, individual and community" (Escobar 2010, 4), implying the need for radical transformations of cultural, political, and ecological ways of societal organising. Acosta and Abarca draw a set of demands for what they call a "patient construction of Utopia" along the lines of Buen Vivir and related cosmologies. They conclude the need for the deconstruction of the "economic growth religion"; a decommodification of Nature that subordinates economic activities to a healthy ecology; economic and societal decentralisation, translating into deep autonomy of local communities; overcoming the concept of "race" as a means to structure societies along asymmetries of wealth and power (Acosta and Abarca 2018, 143-144). What is most notable is that they demand feminist principles to be at the core of all de-/reconstructions of society, economy, and politics fundamentally anchoring the "concepts of autonomy, sovereignty, reciprocity and equity as pillars for ending patriarchy" (Acosta and Abarca 2018, 144).

PD in practice (Klein and Morreo 2019) is complicated. There is a difficult relation with the looseness of the concept in its radical contextuality, and unequivocal political planning with the state as pivotal actor. While leftist progressive governments in Latin America have aimed at promoting a decolonial politics breaking free and setting an end point to the reproduction of (post-)colonial domination and exploitation, the question of whether this needs a strong nation-state, or its dissolution is unresolved. On the one hand, the weakening of nation-states as part of neoliberal structural adjustment policies since the 1970s has made societies more vulnerable, and less democratic, facing global capitalist markets (Lander 2013, 87). As a counter, the re-emphasis of national sovereignty seemed necessary. What can we say about the different variants (populist, skeptical/post-anarchist) of Post-Development in regard to Buen Vivir? Politically, Bolivia and Ecuador have taken a left turn with an emphasis on plurinationality that frames different peoples as nations. Practically this has translated to left-authoritarian neo-development with a centralised national-popular logic focussing on "national sovereignty, democratisation, and the

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redistribution of wealth, [...] national control of the commons, as well as struggles for land distribution" (Lander 2013, 90). While the ontology underlying the several BVs are clearly pluriversal in theory, BV in practice appears close to an "enlightened authoritarianism" (Rahnema 1997), as described in the **populist variant**. There are radical repudiations of Western yardsticks of 'development', at the same time as 'development' in the sense of economic growth, productivism and extractivism is not rejected, but rather a 'nativized' variant is sought. Representation remains possible and necessary at the same time as the state accommodates nationalist discourses

4.2. Botho/Ubuntu

Similarly to Buen Vivir the use of the term Ubuntu[8] is diverse, ranging from the conception of a unique African philosophy to a management tool and instrument for achieving development (Hailey 2008). Ubuntu and its practices must be differentiated on different levels. It serves as 1) a moral basis for ethical being and humanity, 2) a foundation for (South) African constitution and policy making, and 3) a container term for commercialisation in technology and entrepreneurship (Matolino and Kwindingwi 2013). Focussing on the philosophical stream of literature, the core of Ubuntu is an emphasis of interdependence of humanity and the rejection of individualism. Just as Buen Vivir, Ubuntu needs to be thought about in the plural and considered in its heterogeneity. The most well-known name is Ubuntu, a word existing in isiZulu and isiXhosa languages. Similar framings across several African regions and languages are *Botho* (Metz and Gaie 2010, Rukuni 2007, LenkaBula 2008), *Ukama* (LeGrange 2012), *Bomota*, *Gimuntu*, *Umundu*, *Vumunhi*, *Uhuthu*, *Umuntu* (Shutte 1990), *Umunthu* (Mukaka 2015, Musopole 2018), *Eti Uwem* (Terreblanche 2018, also see Benedetta and Margherita 2013, Murove 2009, Bassey 2013). Just as the different names of Buen Vivir; Ubuntu, Botho and related concepts are prone to losing their tacit meaning when translated. Most common are references to proverbs such as "*motho ke motho ka batho ba bang"*, broadly translating to 'no person is complete in themselves, they are fully human in as far as they remain part of the web of life, including creation and the earth' (LenkaBula 2008, 378). Another commonly cited proverb is the Nguni saying "*umuntu ngumuntungabatu"*, which is translated as 'a person is a person through other persons' (Gade 2012, 487). In reviewing Ubuntu literature since the 1950s, Gade finds the most common descriptions referring to humanity, human(e)ness, kindness and goodness of nature (Gade 2011, 307). Later texts from the 1970s and 1980s use additional framings of an African humanism.

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[8] LenkaBula (2008) uses Botho and Ubuntu interchangeably as identical concepts in isiZulu/isiXhosa and Sesotho languages.

How does Botho/Ubuntu connect to Post-Development?

Metz (2017) differentiates between a spiritual and a secular, relational conception of Ubuntu, and what he calls African values more broadly. At the core of the relational conception are communal harmonious relationships that consist of two main aspects: identity (sharing a way of life), and solidarity (care for the quality of life) (Metz 2017, 118). While Metz, as many other proponents of Ubuntu, is not dismissively critical of 'development' as such, his strong criticism is directed towards the inherent anthropocentrism, individualism and technocracy of 'development' discourse and practice. He views this as in direct opposition to an Afro-communal framework and argues for a discourse of "humanization" instead of "progress" (Metz 2017, 137). With regard to a positioning of the human, Botho/Ubuntu is not entirely unambiguous. Contrasting views of Buen Vivir, it does not formulate a radical interwovenness of human and non-human, but focuses on rights, responsibilities and relationality among people. While some authors have limited their discussion to human relations and interpreting Ubuntu as speciesist (Horsthemke and Enslin 2004), others have emphasized that an ethics of care, justice, solidarity and intergenerational commitment must inevitably also be concerned with preserving and caring for the ecosphere (Kelbessa 2015; LenkaBula 2008; LeGrange 2012). Botho/Ubuntu relates well to Post-Development notions of communal solidarity and local culture and knowledges. Through formulating a moral ethics of communal well-being, Botho/Ubuntu provides normative imperatives guiding society and politics. A communal, relational ethic implies equal distribution of wealth and property and the imperative of sharing and providing for others that have less. It stresses that rights are "morally more important than property in relationships between people and the Earth" (Terreblanche 2018, 183).

Although Botho/Ubuntu is cited repeatedly as a role model alternative *to* 'development', one must be careful not to essentialise. Botho/Ubuntu is a set of framings that simultaneously exists in past and present and through this nature perfectly illustrates the interwovenness of modern history and global relations (Goduka 1999). On the one hand, by reasserting an African notion of humanness in opposition to Western notions that have

(and continue to do so) disregard humanity of African peoples thereby legitimising colonialism, oppression and exploitation, Botho/Ubuntu can be read as a counterstrategy to Euro-modern dominant thinking (Ramose 2001) developing and "respecting community (harmony) [as] an objectively desirable kind of interaction that should […] guide what majorities want or which norms become dominant" (Metz and Gaie 2010, 276). On the other hand, Matthews cautions against assuming that from Botho/Ubuntu an African alternative *to* 'development' follows naturally, in the same vein, as she warns that alternatives *to* 'development' as envisaged by PD are not always the aim of local communities, who oftentimes seek entry to the global economy rather than wanting to abandon it (Matthews 2018a, 180). There is, however, a fundamental difference to 'development' as critiqued by PD (cf. *figure 1*), in that sense that relationality and community are core. As Metz argues, "a certain kind of relationship is to be pursued as an end, not merely as a means" (Metz 2018, 117). While Western worldviews formulate an anthropocentric view, focussed on the individual, Botho/Ubuntu and related African ethics take an anthropocentric relational stance, that, in formulating ethical imperatives for social and ecological justice, is different from Cartesian dualist notions (Metz and Gaie 2010). This connects with the Buen Vivir logic of sufficiency as opposed to efficiency (Acosta and Abarca 2018, 136), though not taking the same explicit stance with regard to the rights of Nature.

Although the ethic of reciprocity and communitarian justice could serve as a counter to hyper-capitalism with its logic of self-interest and exploitation (LenkaBula 2008) and politics oriented towards **pluriversal transitions or systemic contestations** (cf. *figure 4*), more than once, it has been appropriated and co-opted for "senseless, and even violent, nation-building projects" such as in several post-colonial African-socialist endeavours (Terreblanche 2018, 169, 170). Even more so, Botho/Ubuntu ethics and politics have been accused of being inherently patriarchal, ethnocentric, conservative and elitist (Cornell 2005). Similarly to BV the question is how Ubuntu can and has been operationalised in political practice. In the post-apartheid context of South Africa calling Ubuntu as a national policy has become a narrative of nation-building, self-identity and creating a sense of

solidarity among fellow citizens. In that sense it, similarly to Buen Vivir nationalist projects, speaks to the authoritarian stream of populist PD, all the while not fundamentally repudiating 'development'. This has "implications for the nature and character of the state as it sharpens the focus on the intricate web of individual/society/state relations" (Nkondo 2007, 94). If the individual's well-being is contingent on that of the community, public policies and state actions would need to take the "collectivity to be a subject of utility" (Ibid., 96). It is obvious that neo-liberal individualism, commodification and capitalist accumulation are contradictive to this principle. The nation state is not contested, but emphasized. In this regard Ubuntu seems to incorporate aspects of several variants. For the first time Ubuntu appeared in a formal legal document in the 1995 Reconciliation Act, but later was not included in the 1996 constitution. The battle over the constitutionalisation of Ubuntu is one within tensions of a vision of Afro-modernity, Euro-modernity and traditional ethics and values viewed as backward (Cornell 2014). Nevertheless, Ubuntu has been referred to as legal principle in law making. Views on this are divided. Van der Walt (2005) criticizes that Ubuntu cannot be taken from the specific local context from which it emerges and be applied outside of its own customary tradition. On the other hand, Cornell asserts that Ubuntu "offers an understanding of personhood that is distinct from that provided by Western jurisprudence" (Cornell as cited in Furman 2014, 159). In terms of translating Ubuntu into a political project, the Tanzanian *Ujamaa* seems an apt example. By way of **political strategies in the name of systemic contestation**, the *ujamaa vijijini[9]* scheme proposed "autonomous communal peasant modes of production reorganised around village cooperatives" (Terreblanche 2018, 171). The cornerstone of this form of Ubuntu socialism were solidarity and mutual care, but eventually undermined and subverted through violent implementation by the state and the "objectification of African peasants and rural dwellers as hapless victims of underdevelopment who needed to be emancipated to higher levels of social and material well being" (Ibhawoh and Dibua 2003, 61). Beyond, Ubuntu has mostly been treated more as an implicit ethics than as a clear basis for policy-making or firm reference point for social movement struggles. In fact, Praeg contends that the critical humanism Ubuntu formulates needs to be seen independently of current politics, rather in

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[9] Ujamaa is a Swahili word that can be translated to familyhood.

cosmopolitan, than in (African) nationalist terms (Praeg 2017, xii). According to him, despite difficulties and contradictions within and among definitions of Ubuntu, the most important aspect of speaking, discussing and taking Ubuntu and related African philosophies serious, not only on a local, but also on a global level, is "*because we need to make a point* about being black in a white world and African in a Western-dominated world" [emphasis in original] (Praeg 2017, 14).

4.3. Minobimaatisiiwin/ Mino bimaadiziwin

Minobimaatisiiwin is a philosophy among Anishinaabeg, Cree and Eeyou peoples in the Great Lakes region of the North American continent. Being aware of the short-comings of translation, the term can be understood as meaning "good life" and includes spiritual-cultural instructions for harmonious existence within and among ecosystems. Among the Anishnaabeg community, the term Mino bimaadiziwin is used, which Simpson translates as "the art of living the good life". She emphasizes that "there is no dichotomy between the "good life" and the "bad life," rather living in a good way is an ongoing process" (Simpson 2011, 18).

Interrelations are recognised both through time and space, which means that a cyclical thinking is at the core. This non-linear thinking is common to "most indigenous and land-based cultures and value systems, [it] is an understanding that the world (time, and all parts of the natural order) […] flows in cycles" (LaDuke 1994, 128). At the core of Minobimaatisiiwin is a "continuous inhabitation of place, an intimate understanding of the relationship between humans and the ecosystem, and the need to maintain that balance" (LaDuke 1994, 128). Minobimaatisiiwin is more a philosophy and has not as overtly been politically operationalised as some of the other examples above.

How does Minobimaatisiiwin connect to Post-Development?

Minobimaatisiiwin is relational in its essence with particular emphasis on the relationship between humans and Nature (LaDuke 1994). The model vision of Minobimaatisiiwin appears close to what Post-Development theorists have envisioned and what Escobar describes as pluriversal politics. There are clear contradictions to the WWII-'development' project and its unilinear structure of projects and intervention. Minobimaatisiiwin with its circularity and emphasis of interdependence clearly contradicts the linear logic of Western capitalist progress. LaDuke argues that a societal, political and economic system that takes account of the indigenous ethics inevitably must be "decentralized, self-reliant and closely based on the carrying capacity of the ecosystem" (LaDuke 1994, 129). She places Minobimaatisiiwin in the context of environmental justice movements outlining Cree and Ojibway communities' struggle against mega dams strongly opposing the extractive model of corporate and state

'development' projects. In contrast to these projects, indigenous living ethics are emphasizing land-based value systems, the centrality of territory and the commons (LaDuke 1994, 136-145).

Additionally, and in view of envisioning autonomous collectives it offers a vision beyond the nation state that can be considered as designs for **pluriversal transitions**. Cree and Anishinaabeg people emphasize the idea of nation beyond nation state borders. They view nation as nation of people rather than as a political structure. Nation in that sense is constituted through the interconnection of people and land, but not as state, rather as a collective of peoples (Kimmerer 2013). While Minobimaatisiiwin formulates more of an ethics than an agenda for policy-making, there are institutions that connect tribes, communities and families at the larger level of a peoples' nation. These are, for example, the Council of Energy Resource Tribes, the American Indian Science and Engineering Society, the Native American Rights Fund, the Indian Law Resource Center, the National Congress of American Indians and several more (LaDuke 1994, 148). While Post-Development literature in the most part refers to the importance and role of social and grassroots movements, there is an important distinction to make in reading resistances of indigenous communities and social movements alike. Simpson cautions against theorizing cohesion of indigenous communities in the same way as social movement resistances claiming that social movement theory is in the most part departing from a Western view of society thereby ignoring indigenous political culture and theory (Simpson 2011, 16). Again, this refers to the role of the state, which indigenous communities do not take for granted, but are contesting. In a variant of **skeptical/post-anarchist PD**, resistance of indigenous communities and their reference to their traditional knowledges can be read as a struggle for decolonization that encompasses political, economic, cultural, ecological and spiritual r

4.4. Swaraj

In the introduction of the original booklet on "*Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule*", first published in 1908, Gandhi acknowledges the influence of anarchist thinkers and frames his argument as a non-violent, but severe "condemnation of 'modern civilization' [inverted commas in original]" (Gandhi 1921). He proposes to attain self-rule through parliamentary Swaraj, which he envisions as rule guided through the doctrine of love. Hind Swaraj originated in the context of British colonial rule in India and is widely understood as a fundamental critique of Western modernity. At the core of Swaraj thinking lies a "critique of modern ways of thinking [...] detecting the contradictions in "modern" societies and presenting "post-modern" visions of socio-economic development" (Ishii 2001, 310). Tajbakhsh, in relating Hind Swaraj to Iranian receptions of Western modernity, identifies two main strands of Gandhi's argument: 1) the fundamental critique and "rejection of modernity and its core institutions such as the nation state", while, at the same time, 2) proposing Hind Swaraj as framework for recrafting an alternative version of the nation state by means of a pluralistic democracy (Tajbakhsh 2018, 1). In that sense, Hind Swaraj can be read as attempt not rejecting the "liberative contribution of modernity [but rather integrating] [...] these positive elements with a liberating re-interpretation of tradition" (Heredia 1999, 1497). Core elements of traditions promoted by Gandhi are swaraj and swadeshi. Swaraj incorporates both self-rule and self-government (Heredia 1999, 1498). Swadeshi, the means by which Gandhi sought to achieve swaraj, describes localism: self-governing villages, all in themselves seen as fundamental unit of politics (Ishii 2001, 308; Heredia 1999, 1498; Roy 1993, 45). The village becomes a political entity where democracy is not exercised from the state downward, but bottom up from the people. At the same time, the community is neither a "mere means for the self-interest of the individual, [nor is the individual] a mere resource for the concerns of community" (Heredia 1999, 1501).

How does Swaraj connect to Post-Development?

With his emphasis on the village as radical democratic entity, where communal life would be negotiated and decided upon, Gandhi's ideal of small-scale communities and rejection of technology, specifically mass long-distance transportation (railways) connects well to populist notions of PD (e.g. Illich 1973; Esteva 1995). Although the suspicion of railway travel seems rather peculiar today, the idea behind speaks to PD propositions in two ways: First, it emphasises the promotion of localized communities; second, it can be read as mocking of modern claims of advancement through progress and endless growth through technology (Nigam 2009, 45).

In the model of the ideal village, the state is still existing, but only minimally, since Gandhi saw the "state essentially as an instrument of violence" (Heredia 1999, 1499). Gandhi was a religious and political leader, but is also read as development economist. Hind Swaraj is not essentially anti-development, but anti-colonial, and trying to imagine a non-violent system of production, mitigating power asymmetries through decentralization. Caring for nature features in his writing, but seems to be more a by-product in his thinking rather than a central element (Roy 1993, 43). Gandhi's Hind Swaraj could be read as some kind of humanist Marxism (Roy 1993, 42), or, reaching even further as "ordered anarchy", reducing state action and power to an absolute minimum (Gandhi 1940, 262). Gandhianism "presupposes that there is an invaluable reservoir of ethical substantiality [...]. Social transformation [...] thus has a material and historical basis in existing values, ideals, practices and institutions" (Clark 2013, 219), making Swaraj a "libertarian, communitarian vision" (Ibid.). It also implies that Swaraj could be located somewhere **between a systemic politics and a pluriversal political strategy**. Gandhi's 'development plan' includes four interrelated principles: 1) simplicity, 2) non-violence, 3) sanctity of labour, and 4) human values (Roy 1993, 44-45). Simplicity refers both to the frugality of living and the rejection of technology, i.e. a deindustrialized, decentralised economic system aimed towards individual self-sufficiency (Roy 1993, 44). Non-violence is ensured through decentralisation of production and having "small units in order to ensure that the economic system would be incapable of producing a surplus. For a surfeit of profit leads to exploitation" (Dasgupta 1985, 120). Labour is considered as based on the principle of learning through doing, accompanied by dignity and ethical considerations both including body and soul of the labourer, but also the environment. If means of production are

cooperatively owned by the labourers i.e. villagers themselves, it is assumed that exploitation can be outruled.

> "Gandhi has talked of production by the masses and not of mass production. The economic system according to him should be geared to low profit. What is true to economics is also true of politics. If there is any concentration of power, it cannot be bridled. The demand is for the erosion of power from the very source. The over-organised institutions of the State should give way to a non-organisation oriented framework." (Dasgupta 1985, 120).

The essence of Gandhi's understanding of 'development' was "development of the people, in cooperation with the people from the bottom, by non-violent means under decentralised economic and political systems" (Roy 1993, 45). The Gandhian vision implies a clear break with the logics and rules of coloniality and imperialism, while formulating a kind of positive 'development' that is based on the underlying traditions and practices previously suffocated by imperial rule (Clark 2013, 220).

The concept of Swaraj continues to be a source of inspiration for social, political and environmental movements (Shrivastava 2019, 285), especially, but not only in the context of resistance against displacement and development mega projects. Groups that claim to practice a contemporary form of Swaraj are among others the National Alliance of Peoples' movements, Adivasi resistance groups, and the Savordaya movement in Sri Lanka. Building on the thoughts of founder A.T. Ariyaratne, Savordaya members seek to create a no poverty, no affluence and conflict-free society.[10] At the core are social infrastructures of mutual respect, well-being, kindness, compassion, equanimity, giving and caring.[11] The movement maintains training schools for rural community leaders claiming to connect 30,000 small communities across the country and with the aim of building a self-sustaining economy in countless localities, satisfying basic needs and structuring community life through communal self-governing systems in which community committees take full but shared responsibility. With regard to politics, founder A.T. Ariyaratne differentiates between party politics and people politics. Savordaya is seeking to practice the latter, believing in radical decentralising and a

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[10]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVKmcgMN3T4&list=PLzKBIdgZH_mTjQ6ayvEH8VAnOxjCdm93d&index=50

[11] https://www.sarvodaya.org/philosophy-and-approach

system of politics where there is no authority, but self-governance in every community, finally leading towards a (global) commonwealth of community republics. Dasgupta argues along similar lines when claiming that "in order to ensure freedom to the common person what we need is a transfer to sovereignty from the elite to the masses, from the polity to the society, and from the power structure to its victims. The end result of the process is Swaraj" (Dasgupta 1985, 121). Dasgupta envisions a world where consumption is based on simplicity rather than multiplicity of wants, translating to life in harmony, rather than dictated by affluence and greed and the growth imperative. Savordaya in that sense implies "the development of all to a standard that can be achieved by all" (Dasgupta 1985, 24). In his essay "Towards a no Poverty Society" (1982), he contends that only two alternatives are viable:

> "either the third world opts for the affluence of a few and the poverty of the rest or that the total resources en masse are diverted for the removal of poverty everywhere.
> Our efforts should be directed to reach a no poverty, no development, no affluence society." (Dasgupta 1985, 52).

A similar movement inspired by Swaraj, is the concept of Radical Ecological Democracy, or Eco-Swaraj, as brought forward by Ashish Kothari and others. It describes a confluence of initiatives across India that are joined within an ongoing process called Vikalp Sangam.[12] In emphasizing a common understanding of ecological wisdom and resilience, social well-being and justice, radical political and economic democracy, and cultural and knowledge plurality, the vision of Eco-Swaraj puts "collectives and communities at the centre of governance" rather than the state (Kothari 2019, 289-290). The key is localization and tradition, while acting radically democratic and linking to similar initiatives globally.

The idea of swaraj and its contemporary practices can therefore be seen as veering between several layers. It is clearly an anti-imperial counter vision and practice, which reaches beyond a mere systemic contestation, but proposes a libertarian, anarchist structuring of society and politics.

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[12] www.vikalpsangam.org.

4.5. Degrowth

In a recent tweet anthropologist Jason Hickel proposed a definition of Degrowth as a "planned reduction of excess energy and resource use in rich nations to bring the economy back into balance with the living world, while reducing inequality and improving people's access to the resources they need to live long, healthy, flourishing lives."[13] Important to note is the emphasis on "planned" and "rich nations". Thus, most generally framed, degrowth demands seek to prompt changes in the imperial modes of production and trade (Brand and Wissen 2019). At the same time proponents emphasize interconnections of environment and social justice, "seeking to re-politicise societies and open debates" (Liegey and Nelson 2020, 155) about alternatives to established and universally assumed modes and imagining a post-capitalist world (Dengler and Seebacher 2019; Hickel 2018, 2020a; Kallis 2018).

Degrowth proponents have repeatedly pointed out that, especially in light of a recession induced by the COVID-19 pandemic, degrowth should not be confused with economic collapse, inflation and unemployment (Hickel and Kallis 2020; Hickel 2020b). In contrast, they advocate a planned and structured deconstruction of excess capitalist production and consumerism that currently is highly asymmetrical, the riches of a small part of the global population being dependant on the poverty of a larger part. Rather than deprivation, proponents view degrowth as a just and much needed downscaling of the economy and consumption and a reorientation towards sufficiency and a 'good life' within non-monetary indicators.

Degrowth as a movement is more human-centred than the philosophies of Buen Vivir or Minobimaatisiiwin discussed above. Nevertheless, planetary boundaries and the increase in severity of environmental crises are central aspects in attempting to "map ways out of hyper-consumption, inequality, weak democracy and the environmental crises caused by growth-driven capitalism" (Liegey and Nelson 2020, 49). What becomes also obvious when looking at the worlds of many non-Western peoples is that they long practice degrowth,

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[13] https://twitter.com/jasonhickel/status/1314490788869410818?s=09

simply without calling it by this name. Degrowth in that sense is simultaneously a very (one could even say: exclusively) Western endeavour (read: the urgent need to end over-excessive consumption, the obsessive desire for economic growth and the acknowledgement and fundamental halt of imperial modes of living) and a non-Western practice (read: acknowledgement of human and non-human interdependences and sufficient ways of living).

How does Degrowth connect to Post-Development?

Bendix (2016) has argued that Degrowth and Post-Development are not identical, although they can both be considered transition discourses. Putting intersections in a nutshell, one can say that demands of Degrowth are oftentimes very focused on the economy and the need to disarticulate capitalism (Liegey and Nelson 2020, 152), despite of also coming in social democratic and conservative variants (Bendix 2016). While this is implicit in Post-Development it is not as pronounced there. Degrowth formulates **systemic contestations** to some extent, although a belief in technological fixes seems to imply the want for upholding current patterns of consumption and production, only somewhat more sustainable (Ziai 2014). PD on the other hand is more enunciated in demands to dismantle structures of imperial hierarchies and power asymmetries. PD sketches more holistic ontological visions of non-Western, non-hegemonic ways of living and views them as emancipatory (Bendix 2016, 7). In Degrowth debates this decolonial, also feminist, lens remains too often absent (Dengler and Seebacher 2019). Both Degrowth movements as well as the PD 'school' are heterogenous, nevertheless one can say that the former directs demands towards the state level, whereas the latter is mainly focussed on the activities of collectives and grassroots groups with an emphasis on the aspects of collectivity and autonomy.

Nirmal and Rocheleau (2019) are elaborating what could not only be understood as the intersection and common ground between Degrowth, Post-Development, and other transition discourses as contoured by Escobar (2016), but also as essential guiding principle for the pluriverse of transitional struggles. They are calling for a "broader

movement of justice that is grounded and rooted in place" and that moves "beyond political economy, towards political ecology, and beyond critiques of consumption to critiques of domination" (Nirmal and Rocheleau 2019, 470). In that, they are precisely pinpointing the critique of Degrowth being a too Western dominated discourse oftentimes detached from daily struggles in Southern contexts, while at the same time elaborating on what Bendix (2016) has described as the combined strength of Degrowth, Post-Development and other transition discourses: on the one hand, a critical approach both to the unquestioned romanticization of tradition as untainted way of life (e.g. in the populist PD stream as outlined by Ziai 2004) and a critique of Degrowth's imaginations of techno-managerial solutions for overcoming destructive ways of living and producing (Eversberg and Schmelzer 2016; Hickel and Kallis 2020). On the other hand, the acknowledgement that persistent global inequalities and injustices are deeply and inextricably rooted in the legacies of colonial domination and oppression, which becomes apparent both in structures and institutions, but also in the ways knowledge is created and acknowledged or dismissed as legitimate or irrelevant. If the core of **pluriversal political strategies** are a pluriverse of contextual place-based alternatives that do not make universalising claims, yet at the same time become neither relativistic nor random to critiques – and counters – of domination as a reference point. Then, Degrowth, though not necessarily a Post-Development imaginary, may provide the toehold for alternatives *to* 'development' actively promoted in parts of the world where the doctrine of 'development' continues to be strong. As a movement or a sphere of action Degrowth could therefore be seen as a "web of networks" (Liegey and Nelson 2020, 53) that are generally aligned to an understanding of non-hierarchical organising, collective, yet decentralised action, and a critique of neoliberal, privatised and excess capitalist over-consumption.

Mapping PD alternatives

	Buen Vivir	Botho/Ubuntu	Minobimaatisiiwin	Swaraj	Degrowth
Location	Several countries in South America	several African countries	Northern parts of Turtle Island	India	Europe
Core	Living well, plenitude beyond material well-being, non-linearity of being	Radical interdependence of humanity and rejection of individualism	Good life as harmonious existence within and among ecosystems, processual	Frugality of living, decentralized self-government	Obsession with unending economic growth must end
Nature	Harmonious relationship, fundamental inter-relatedness, personhood of non-human	Care for nature is implied in moral ethics of communal well-being	Deep interrelationality, mutual care and respect	not explicit, but implied in rejection of modern thinking	Human-centred, but recognition of planetary boundaries and interconnection of environmental and social justice
Society	Local culture, plurality, communal well-being as reference point	Relationality, rights, respect among people, anthropocentric, yet relational stance	Interrelations through time and space, autonomy	Localized, decentralized villages, non violence, no poverty, no affluence	Imaginary of more sufficient life, sometimes proposal of autonomous communities
Knowledge	Breaking free from dualisms of modernity, local and traditional knowledges, contextuality	Counter to Euro-modern thinking	Indigenous knowledges	Local knowledges, rejection of technology	Sometimes high hopes in technological solutions
State/Politics	Implementation within boundaries of nation state considered as problematic if not failed (cf. Ecuador and Bolivia)	Ubuntu humanism oftentimes seen as independent of current politics	Nation state beyond borders, nation of people rather than political structure, fundamental contestation of the nation state	Rejection of the (nation) state, alternative of pluralistic democracy, self-rule and self-government, ordered anarchy	Need for top-down regulation by the state, at the same time collective grassroots organising
Economy	Buen Vivir Socialism of redistribution within extractive economic model	Equal distribution of wealth and property, imperative of sharing and providing for others, though not necessarily rejection of 'development'	Decentralization, self-reliance, land-based value systems and commons	Decentralization, self-reliance, self -sufficiency	Descale of excessive production and resource use, mainly in the global North

FIGURE 5 MAPPING PD ALTERNATIVE

5. Layers of Post-Development and alternatives to 'development'

In the outset, I have taken the criteria proposed by Escobar (1995, 215ff) and other PD proponents (*figure 2*) as principles to guide my analysis. Navigating the wealth of alternatives has shown that while these principles are a helpful structure, they are not comprehensive enough to grasp the ecological and (inter-)relational dimensions of many non-Western worldviews. The analyses has also made clear that a rejection of the entire paradigm and/or term of 'development' is oftentimes not explicitly formulated nor intended in these imaginaries. The reason for that lies, once again, in the multi-faceted, politically charged subscriptions to the container term 'development', but also in efforts of subversion and appropriation. This haziness inevitably precipitates in Post-Development theory and many other critical approaches. Definitions of terms and critique can only be subjective and positionally charged snap-shots, but are nevertheless important in framing analyses. This is why, drawing together the insights and learning gained from the above plethora of alternatives, it necessary to formulate an approximate frame of what my purpose in mapping, exploring and analysing alternatives *to* 'development' (read: Post-Development) has been.

On the one hand, and following Escobar, Post-Development theory has proposed a fundamental critique of the entire paradigm of 'development' (read: the post-WWII political project of "developing the underdeveloped") and its rejection. Escobar, among many other scholars, criticized 'development' as an apparatus perpetuated by a host of 'experts' equipped with a particular kind of knowledge simply and solely targeted towards imposing and universalising a particular way of living, closely connected to a hierarchy of bodies. The analysis of locally and culturally rooted concepts of being and relating makes clear that there is no *single* alternative-*to*-development, but a wealth of contextual and place-based alternatives-*to*-development". There are commonalities that join the several localised alternatives like a red thread and that may be subsumed as a heterogenous counter to the homogenous monoculture of European modernist thinking. The alternatives outlined

provide a "living ethics" (Terreblanche 2018). Themes that appear to be running through several propositions outlined above, albeit to varying degrees, are:

- non-anthropocentric but bio-centric understandings of the world
- emphasis of harmony among all beings of the creation
- rejection of human-nature dualism
- deep relationality, non-individualism,
- community, reciprocity, caring and sharing,
- non-technocracy
- connection to land, territory

some are
- anti-statist
- anti-capitalist

These aspects are mediated by identity and solidarity (Metz 2017). What becomes apparent in all non-Western visions reviewed is a fundamental break with linearity. The visions formulated are ends in themselves, not a means to an assumedly desired state (Metz 2017, Acosta and Abarca 2018). The recurring themes are autonomy, communality, territory, relationality, harmony. The formulation of alternatives often emerges from marginalised groups and communities and is in opposition to mainstream and growth-centred capitalist development doctrines (Acosta and Abarca 2018, 133).

The criticism towards drawing up a list such as the above is obvious: how could it be legitimate to condemn one universalising mission only to counter it with another normative list claiming universal applicability? On the other hand, if arguing for a pluriverse of cosmovisions, how to make sure that not all is relativist?[14] Despite of seeking out a pluriverse, trying to formulate some kind of minimum common denominator seems legitimate seeing that there appear to be core understandings of structuring society and communal life emerging and reappearing in traditions and locations. In carefully trying to condense them I am not attempting to make an essentialist argument, but, following Dasgupta (1985), to uncover what is existing *beneath*, *beyond* and *beside* the universalising and suffocating discourse of 'development'. At the same time, I am aware and cautious not

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[14] I am grateful to Aram Ziai for raising these points.

to formulate a Manichean opposition or a new universalism from the left. Nevertheless, the basic principles of anarchism, such as self-organization, voluntary association, mutual aid, all of which can be found in the several non-Western imaginaries discussed, are not new, but have continuously been claimed and practiced throughout history. Compiling such list of 'living ethics' is therefore far from formulating new theory, rather it seems to describe "an attitude: the rejection of certain types of social relations, the confidence that certain others would be better ones on which to build a liveable society, the belief that such a society could actually exist" (Graeber 2004, 4).

One must avoid thinking in binaries of the generalised "West" versus the localised and contextualised "Rest". On the one hand, this requires including alternatives from Western contexts as one of the provincialized alternatives that will add to the pluriverse of PD alternatives. On the other hand, in writing about localised imaginaries, one needs to be cautious not to romanticize an idea of pure and untainted traditional ways of living that simply need to be recovered from their pre-colonial past and can serve as a counter to a neo-colonial present (Matthews 2018a, 186; Matthews 2018b; Mendoza 2018, LeGrange 2012). This idea is dangerously close to the image of the "noble savage" (Kiely 1999) and the very justified critique of an unquestioned and romantic celebration of the local. As an example, Ubuntu is a "glocal" concept that is not pre-colonial and does not necessarily fully reject the idea of 'development' (Matthews 2018a, 188; Metz 2017). Matthews cautions against assuming that precolonial, pure visions of a better life can simply be recovered. Even though different conceptions of the economy, politics and society exist, this does not mean that they are not influenced by modernist and Western discourses and ways of thinking. Local imaginaries might claim alternatives, but not due to idealism; rather, as Matthews argues, more with the aim of participation than withdrawal. The same also applies to recovered, reformulated and, literally, modernised formulations of Buen Vivir, Sumak Kawsay and others. In thinking along the lines of pluriversal ontologies without being prescriptive, Escobar, in drawing on Claudia von Werlhof, provides us with a helpful metaphoric guidance when making a distinction between the universalising, extractive and inherently patriarchal 'development' ideology and pluriversal, mutually nurturing cultures.

Rather than formulating some kind of exclusive and dichotomous view on society at large, the example illustrates that pluriversal ontologies do not provide an extension, or reformulation of modernist thinking, they are arguing along a completely different ethics of life and living. In that sense,

> "patriarchy goes well beyond the exploitation of women; it explains the systematic destruction of nature. Conversely, matriarchy is not defined by the predominance of women over men, but by an entirely different conception of life, not based on domination and hierarchies, and respectful of the relational fabric of all life."
> (Escobar 2018, 10)

What implication does this have for the way we define Post-Development? Essentially it means that there cannot be a Post-Development alternative *to* 'development' that is not conflictual in relation to hegemonic norms. Any proposed alternative is inevitably influenced by past and present of 'development' and global (economic) relations and structures and will therefore always be a hybrid formulation of a native cosmovision (Mbembe 2002, Mendoza 2018). Nevertheless, it defines a common, yet not universalising, understanding of what respectful living and co-existing means.

Rather than culminating into a tick-box exercise determining 'pure' or untainted Post-Development doctrine, something that would be utterly detrimental to the endeavour of de-universalising dominant Western worldviews, the above mapping and analysis of alternatives serves four important purposes:

Firstly, despite the selection of alternatives inevitably remaining inconclusive and inherently arbitrary, it showcases the wealth of cosmovisions beyond the dominance of the Western way of life, which, despite its obvious failings, continues to claim universal relevance and applicability.

Secondly, thinking about alternatives *to* 'development', and alternatives *to* modernity, necessitates a fundamental questioning of the universality of Cartesian rationality upon which European supremacy claims are founded. Interrogating cosmologies from India, several African countries, North America and the Andes demonstrates that

nature-culture dichotomy, and its separation of subject-object and body-mind is a Western construction not existing in other ontologies (Apffel-Marglin 1996, 9). Through Western recurrence on Cartesian rationality and the primacy of a capitalist logic, nature, body and mind have become commodified, leading to a hierarchical relationship between commoditized and non-commoditized beings, "one being valued and visible, the other devalued and invisible" (Apffel-Marglin 1996, 10). In face of the climate crisis it becomes impossible to maintain this separation for much longer.

Thirdly, the analysis shows that alternatives (*to* 'development') are, regardless of whether this is formulated explicitly, or entailed implicitly, political and can only be analysed and understood as political, subversive strategies applied and practiced on several layers of political strategizing simultaneously. Rather than pursuing the perpetual illusion of a redefinition of 'development' that will eventually be rethought in such way that it turns out just, making and understanding 'development' and alternatives thereof as political gives way to a field of contestations. This can, while avoiding the normative universal common good, accommodate pluriverse conceptions of a good life without having to privilege one over the other. At same time it ensures that one does not impinge upon the other.

Fourthly, one needs to be cautious in framing pluriversal and Post-Development alternatives *to* 'development' as a pure and untainted way of life. It is a common critique of idealising the 'noble savage' that is raised towards populist formulations of PD, and in seeking to uncover a pre-colonial non-Western way of living many attempts too easily fall prey of this simplistic binary of thinking. Contemporary society and politics are inevitably interlinked, both across space and through time. As Matthews (2018a) poignantly states, such endeavour also assumes that there are spaces where no power exists, or at least where it is possible to step out the frames of power and coloniality.

What can be drawn from the four points above? I propose viewing and further conceptualizing Post-Development pluriversal alternatives *to* 'development' as twofold, but interrelated: First, as a set of strategies for confronting de/coloniality; secondly, as a set of anarchist strategies for direct action and prefigurative politics.

5.1   Post-Development as a set of strategies confronting de/coloniality

In recent years there has been much engagement and initiative around 'decolonizing development' (and 'decolonizing geography', 'decolonizing education', and many other disciplines or activities). Yet, the question remains "what, how, by whom and for whom" 'we' (who is the 'we', after all?) are seeking to decolonize 'development'.[15] By failing to respond to these questions, well-intended efforts for 'decolonizing' are in danger of reproducing just the same cycle of assumed universality and of speaking for others, rather than undoing power asymmetries, hegemonic structures and institutions that continue to perpetuate those inequalities and injustices we are taught to understand as lack of 'development.' It has become obvious that by taking a Post-Development lens, one can no longer ask HOW to make 'development' better, but: "WHY, through what historical processes, and with what consequences did Asia, Africa and Latin America come to be 'invented' as the 'Third World' through discourses and practices of 'development'" (Escobar 1992) and how and why these conditions continue to be maintained.

Possibly the most viable endeavour in theorizing Post-Development and other transition discourses more broadly is not about determining what counts as Post-Development (or alternative, transformative, etc.), or, in other words: what are the cornerstones for a good life for all. But what is it that counteracts it. This brings us back to Esteva's words that provided this paper's point of departure: we can share a common 'no' to 'development' but be open to the thousands of 'yeses'. In this regard, Aníbal Quijano's intervention on "between 'development' and the 'coloniality of power' "(2017) serves as a helpful frame for getting to the core of what must be meant by demanding 'alternatives *to* development'. Quijano has traced the roots of current and persistent global divides and structural inequalities. He has mapped how race as a category of global, social classification remains closely intertwined with Eurocentric and hegemonic rationalities of power and capitalism. The coloniality of power is made up of a racialised regime of rule and a regime of exploitation. It becomes blatantly clear: what is ultimately required is breaking the power

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[15] http://blog.gdi.manchester.ac.uk/decolonising-development/

of, and building alternatives *to* the structures created and maintained by and through this coloniality. Alternatives that move beyond 'development' must essentially and fundamentally aspire to break and overcome the structures and logics of power and exploitation.

Rather than formulating a list of what are Post-Development characteristics, one could turn the exercise on its head. In articulating a list of oppressive, unjust, racist, hierarchical, asymmetric, paternalistic, violent, extractive practices - in short: manifestations of coloniality - that need to be abandoned and overthrown, the 'no' is very clear. At the same time, this does not turn any formulation of a 'yes' into some pure and untainted good, but takes account of the several, sometimes conflicting, layers on which alternatives are formulated, practiced, and justified. Approaching these layers as hybridizations of each other and as larger and smaller parts under the umbrella of coloniality allows for formulating counters to Eurocentrism and relations of power without dismissing demands for greater material equality. It avoids receding into traditionalist ideal types of pre-modern societies, while at the same time confronting deeply inscribed asymmetrical structures of capitalism and globalization that continue to maintain inequality and poverty. In the spirit of building a pluriversal vision of the future the task at hand is not to decide about what should be included, but rather what should not. In that sense, what counts as PD could be processes that are targeted or aimed at "decolonial modes of seeing and being-in-relation, bringing their best skills and creative powers to co-design future alternatives, as peers in a horizontal movement of movements" (Escobar 2018) (as quoted in Nirmal and Rocheleau 2019, 481).

In reviewing several alternative conceptions to 'development', it has become clear that while there are contextually rooted differences in their formulation, all of them refer to a type of relational ontology that is fundamentally different to Eurocentric ontology with its separation of society and Nature. Localised ontologies are inextricably interlinked with territory. In their layeredness they highlight the interlinkage of alternatives *to* 'development' and territorial rootedness. With conquest, imperialism, and coloniality, ontologies that are linked with territories (not: states) have been continuously side-lined.

Post-Development alternatives *to* 'development' in all their variety necessitate a break with anthropocentrism, including a fundamental critique of modernity, capitalism, doing away with the "society/nature duality and reconfigur[ing] communities of political and moral agents" (Gudynas 2013, 35).

To spell out, understand and counter the problems with 'development' discourse and practice there is no alternative other than situating 'development' as a construct that has resulted from colonialism and that continues to perpetuate itself within this legacy. Essentially, such lens requires fundamental contestations to the current world order. As Terreblanche contends "decolonisation will remain central to counterstruggles and radical alternatives" (Terreblanche 2018, 184). Bringing into being a regime of Post-Development therefore means "an awareness that reality can be redefined in terms other than those of development and that, consequently, people and social groups can act otherwise on the basis of those different definitions" (Escobar 2007, 21). This points to the most radical task that abandoning 'development' implies. It means moving beyond the paradigm of modernity in two senses: epistemologically and socio-politically (Escobar 2007, 27). Post-Development cannot be theorized without existential approaches to knowing, an openness to unfamiliar epistemological concepts and ontological frames, while being sensitive to and aware of the "problems of representation, interpretation, and translation between different onto-epistemologies and cosmo-visions" (Ahenakew 2006, 330). If we imagine the endeavour to systemize the diversity of PD somewhat broader, something that this paper attempts to contribute to, it could be conceptualised as efforts aimed at "displacing the centrality of Western reasoning" (Ahenakew 2006, 337). In Arturo Escobar's words (2020, xii) the endeavour is: "Shifting the episteme of the modern social sciences, which is […] indebted to ontological dualisms, toward a post-Enlightenment configuration of knowledge forms should be one of the goals of academic cultural politics on a pluriversal register." This makes Post-Development essentially a decolonial strategy.

5.2   Post-Development as a set of anarchist strategies for direct action

Rather than a homogenous imaginary of the 'noble savage' and its untainted, romanticized perfect world, Post-Development needs to account for and encompass a set of contextual and multiple decolonial counterstrategies, direct actions and prefigurative politics within realms of politics, society, knowledge. These are simultaneously local and global. The several pluriversal alternatives outlined above in their radical contextuality, yet deep societal, environmental and political interrelatedness, can serve as spirit and "challenge to the north to rethink its assumptions about democracy and justice" (Terreblanche 2018, 184). First steps in this have been taken by the Degrowth movement.

One fundamental question arises from the analysis of imaginaries such as Buen Vivir, Ubuntu, Minobimaatisiiwin, Swaraj and others: Are nation-states obstacles or can they also be agents for transformative change? What does citizenship in a way of Post-Development pluriversal politics mean?

As outlined in *part 1.4.,* Post-Development most broadly, and also the examples given more specifically, can be read as an anarchist strategy. Anarchist ideas such as those of intersecting local struggles, a wariness about state representation, and the social as a network rather than a closed holism or a hierarchy (May 2012) as well as direct action, are easily recognizable in the alternatives described in *part 4*. Direct Action and prefigurative politics speak to the essential anarchist project of 'building a new society in the shell of the old'. According to Graeber, "these who carry out direct action are insisting on their right to act as if they were already free" (Graeber 2009, 235). Wald (2015, 626-627) identifies three main pillars of anarchism: 1) the struggle against domination, 2) direct action and prefigurative politics and 3) diversity and open-endedness. Elements of these can be found to varying degrees in Buen Vivir, Ubuntu, Minobimaatisiiwin and Swaraj.

Buen Vivir, although it needs to be differentiated between ontological basis and actual implementation, emphasizes the idea of seeing different peoples as nations, and aspiring a plurinational society that negates representation from above. The case with Ubuntu is twofold, the ideology encompasses community transcending borders. In practice, the concept has been (mis-)used as a rather ethnocentric and nationalist nation-building

project. Minobimaatisiiwin highlights the relevance of embeddedness in place and territory. In contrast to the Westphalian nation state, the notion of 'indigenous nation' is, similarly to Buen Vivir, a pluriversal imaginary. Swaraj fundamentally rejects the 'modern' nation state, but seeks to recraft an alternative vision of the nation state by means of pluralistic democracy. Degrowth, while framing itself as a movement, or even movement of movements, makes clear demands on the state.

What seems to run like a red thread through Post-Development propositions are demands for autonomy, or rather autonomies in the plural (Esteva 2019). Esteva argues that these demands and struggles are reaching beyond the institutions of formal democracy, beyond a neoliberal economic society, and beyond Western modernity in a sense of disassociating the rationale of individualism and invoking a conceptions of persons as knots in nets of relationships, which constitute the many real we's defining a new society" (Esteva 2019, 101). The struggles of the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) in the Mexican state Chiapas and the fights for democratic autonomy in the Kurdish region in North Syria known as Rojava (Western Kurdistan) provide apt examples for further analyses with regard to the question as to what extent autonomy from Western hegemonic models is possible and what it implies with regard to private property, wage labour, production and the market, elections and politics and knowledge creation beyond Baconian science paradigms.

Linking these observations with the arguments outlined above relating to de/coloniality, the question becomes "not whether or not there is power, but which relationships of power are acceptable and which are unacceptable" (May 2012). Again, this highlights the multi-layeredness of political strategies (*as in figure 4*) without homogenizing or creating good/bad, global/local, noble/evil dichotomies.

6. A tentative conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to map and explore concepts and ontologies that have been termed or could be considered alternatives *to* 'development'. Thinking about and formulating alternatives *to* 'development' implies the existence of a status quo setting the norm. The preceding cursory mapping has highlighted the prevailing and practiced wealth of non-developmental living ethics that move beyond the normative yardsticks of 'development'.

The findings above can hopefully be taken as a basis that will help to weave (political) strategies aimed at overcoming the paradigmatic crisis in 'development' theory and practice, which is linked to the legacy of a Eurocentric evolutionism in 'development', and a very narrow conception of what a good, 'developed' society should look like. Post-Development pluriversal approaches, with their critique of Eurocentrism and power relations, and especially through the focus on non-Western models of politics, economics, knowledge and culture, allow for a broadening of horizons, a reinvention, or even abandonment, of 'development' theory leaving behind the evolutionism that has shaped 'development' thinking and practice.

Taking Post-Development demands seriously must mean moving beyond Eurocentric political frames, towards a Post-Development decolonial and anarchist politics (Escobar 2010, 6; Ranta 2018). Post-Development decolonial politics in that sense are "alternatives *to* modernity" entailing radical societal and political transformations towards post-capitalism (post-growth, post-extractivism), post-liberalism and post-statism (Escobar 2010, Lander 2013). They are simultaneously means and ends for building a new society in the shell of the old.

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Glossary of Alternatives

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The pluriverse is vast and the worlds and layers we have travelled above can only be a snapshot. This glossary extends this snapshot, but will also inevitably remain inconclusive. Nevertheless, it can be used as a starting point for further research, inspiration and discovery. A further, more comprehensive, collection is provided by Kothari et al (2019) Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary.

AFRICA:

Agabagaya: "Sharing knowledge"

For a group of Ugandan women, there is nothing more important than sharing education and knowledge. Therefore, every opportunity for education is used, which demonstrates a strong belief in knowledge. Shared and collective knowledge here serves as a sign of trust and mutual respect. Skills are not used to exclude but rather to include and improve (Janzen, 2008).

Agaciro: "Dignity and Self-Respect"

In Rwanda the word Agaciro transmits a strong message: "Dignity" or "Self-Respect". After development aid was withdrawn from Rwanda in 2012, political elites realized that relying on the help from others cannot be a long-term solution. The idea of Agaciro was used to stabilize the political situation with a collective commitment to self-reliance (Behuria, 2016).

Saakumnu: "Religion is life and life is religion"

The Saakumnu is an African worldview exhibiting a strong belief in spirituality and an intense connection between humans, the nature and this specific spiritual sphere. Without spirituality there would be no nature and without nature there would be no tasks and space for humans since their purpose is take care of their ancestor's land (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2009).

Ubuntu: "Self-Realization through others"

Ubuntu is a lived philosophy originating from Southern Africa. It can be translated as "Humanity" or "Sense of solidarity". A person can feel a connection as single part of a unity. With this feeling there comes a responsibility. One person's personality interacts with the spirit of the community; in other words: one person's identity can only be built by interacting with and respecting others. Ubuntu-comprehension exceeds the Western interpretation of empathy, mutual respect and Human Rights (Mboti, 2015; Praeg, 2014).

ASIA (INDIA):

Hind Swaraj: "The earth provides enough for every man's needs but not every man's greed"

Gandhi's Manuscript "Hind Swaraj" depicts a vision of society. The narrative is that self-rule will result in the abandonment of greed and into the accomplishment of the soul's final emancipation from the body. One of the four supporting pillars is Swadeshi, which can be seen as the "law of laws", claims that people need to serve the world in order to understand the unity of all. People can achieve Swadeshi through Self-Rule (Swaraj) and the rejection of violence, linked to Swaraj. The Sarvodaya (Greatness for All) can only be attained when the community as a whole prosper. If there is no collective gain, there is no progress at all (Veeravalli, 2015; Nandy, 1981; Kothari, 2018; Bawa, 1996).

ASIA (IRAN):

Gharbzadegi/ Occidontosis: "Disease of westernization"

In the 1960's a development critique appeared in Iran, initially phrased by Ahmad Fardid and then distributed by Jalal Al-i Ahmad. Gharbzadegi pictures a society that is rotten from the inside and consequently ends in pathological behavior patterns. The cause is a collective state of disorientation due to the lack of tradition and a dominant ideology. It leads to blindly consuming Western products and the acquisition of Western thinking and judgement patterns. The Anti-westernization movement in Iran mainly upholds the Occidontosis as reason for rebellion and change (Ziai, 2019).

ASIA (JAPAN):

Kyosei: "Living and working together for the common good"

Kyosei is a traditional Japanese concept emerging from the Confucian philosophy. Nowadays Kyosei became a synonym to concepts of corporate responsibility, ethical decision making and responsible reciprocity. Kyo can be translated as "working together" and sei as "life". Originally this word issues from the ecological context of "symbiosis" where two partners fuse together based on the conviction that it will be of mutual benefit. The balance between individual interests and care for the community always needs to be oscillated (Boardman, Kato 2003).

AUSTRALIA:

Kanyini: "The Caretaker"

The Kanyini describes an Aboriginal philosophy, which is acted out through four principles. One of them is Ngura the sense of belonging home to the ancestor's land. The Walytja signifies a deep connection in the family. The Ngura is the reason a person can feel Walytja. The Kurnpa is an individual experience of soulfulness. It concludes in a sentiment of responsibility for one's environment resulting from Tjurkurrpa, the dream time. This dream time is a time to envision the right way to live. The Aborigines are aware of the fact that their perceptive ability is limited nevertheless they see themselves as "Caretaker" of the earth (Schütz, 1998).

NORTH AMERICA:

Minobimaatisiiwin: "All life is accountable to natural law"

The Minobimaatisiiwin is a Native American indigenous worldview strongly attached to the aspect of giving life, rebirth and fertility. The main message is that all life is accountable to natural law, which means that giving and taking need to maintain the equilibrium between human and nature (La Duke,1992).

Tsawalk: "Bringing cultures together without assuming cultural differences just disappear"

The indigenous-Canadian Nuu-chah-nulth concept of Tsawalk can be seen as a critique on the Eurocentric world view consisting of Darwinism and competitiveness. The survival-of-the-fittest-presumption is rejected due to the ecological nature of differences and polarities in the evolution. The aim is to balance out between shifting cultural polarities. The main practices to manage polarities are mutual respect and true understanding others, shared harmony and mutually agreeable behavior. Life consists of polarities hence competition is not the best way to deal with it. Therefore, the only right way to live is in collaboration (Atleo, 2011).

SOUTH/ LATIN AMERICA:

Buen Vivir: "Good Living"

Buen Vivir is a collective term and exogenous ascription that sums up a variety of South and Latin American indigenous world views and life practices. The term Buen Vivir became acquainted after critical voices against development that only focuses on economic growth got prominent and Ecuador set the concept in its constitution. Thus, the nature needs to be protected and needs to be seen as a legal person (Vanhulst/ Beling 2014; Chassagne, 2018)

Churcar: "Alternatives to Development"

The Tacan word Churcar means "Hard rowing against the current" and describes exactly the indispensable quest to think of new alternatives. Different than the ideas of alternative development strategies Churcar describes the idea of an alternative to development and the destruction of "development" (Gudynas, 2014).

Communalidad: "Far beyond Western ideas of cooperation or community"

The Oaxacan indigenous concept Communalidad expresses the possibility that there may be more than just the sense of solidarity or community. It is describing an inter-connectedness between communities and human beings and is a very special way of being. It symbolizes unity in diversity and can be used to re-conceptualize citizenship. The most important leverage can be practiced through education and the selection of taught content so that critical awareness can be developed (Weber, 2015).

Lekil Kuxlejal: "Another world is possible"

Lexil Kuxlejal is an indigenous concept rooted in the Tzotzil community in Chiapas, Mexico. It seems close to the well-known Buen Vivir and can be translated as "Good Living". The main message conveys that "another world is possible". Tzotzil-Mayan people claim autonomy for living this alternative (Avila, 2011; Prage, 2015).

Nandereko: "Harmonious Living"

The Guarani Nandereko can be translated as harmonious life, it is also referred to in the Bolivian constitution. It describes a specific way of living together in harmony(Lustig, 1998).

Pachakuti: "The turning over of space-time"

This alternative obtains its meaning from the Aymara and Quechua from the Bolivian Andes and depicts a complex view on space and time. Their word is strongly connected to the moments of rebellion and social revolutions regarding the Spanish invasion which resulted in the demise of the Inca empire. Pacha can be translated as the simultaneity of space and time, Kuti can be translated as return or turn over. It is an alignment of past, present and future, which cannot be understood in the limitation of Western languages (Seidl, 2019, Swineheart, 2019)

Sentirpensar: "Think-Feeling with the Earth"

The Sentirpensar is a way of perceiving the world. People living according to Sentirpensar have a deep connection to and with the earth and can interpret signs better than industrialized and modernized groups. These groups have developed a high sensibility conceiving nature's signs due to their ability to feel and think with the earth (Escobar, 2016).

Sumak Kawsay: "Life in Plenitude"

The Ecuadorian concept Sumak Kawsay can be translated as "Life in Plentitude" and is a philosophy of life, which is based on specific ancestral indigenous knowledge and practices. An important role plays the relation between human and nature as well as the familiar relation in communities. As illustrated in the concept of Pachakuti a similar conception of space-time is noticeable (Cuestas-Caza, 2018; Quick, Williams Goodrich, 2019).

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