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Content

Alternatives *to* 'development'? Exploring counter-hegemonic practices (with)in politics, economies and knowledges

Julia Schöneberg[1]

Abstract

Postdevelopment (PD) proponents have long called for alternatives to 'development' as a counter to the logics and impact of Eurocentrism, coloniality and the uncritical belief in euro-modernist ideologies of progress and growth, all of which come to be subsumed as 'development.' The question is whether we can think of alternatives to hegemonic models of the economy, politics and knowledge whilst living and being entangled in, through and with them. This paper sets out to examine concrete social and political practices that can be understood as resistances, i.e. counter-hegemonic alternatives, to the hegemonic model proclaimed as universal. The approach of the paper is to explore practices from different geographical contexts within politics, economies and knowledge. Rather than reiterating binaries of a noble and pure non-modern, non-Western, traditional way of life versus the destructiveness and coloniality of the industrialized West, the paper seeks to uncover what makes practices hegemonic, what are possible alternatives and how they relate to each other beyond the particularities of their contexts. The discussion concludes by cautioning of the danger of nationalist and exclusionary celebrations of the local, that rely both on the assumption of a homogenous local, but also on the delineation from the alleged Western enemy. The paper seeks to respond to the critique of vagueness in PD propositions and the scarcity of viable on-the-ground practices by highlighting how lived alternatives confront, contest and counter the assumed universality of 'development.'

Keywords: non-capitalist, hybridity, postdevelopment, transformation, deconstruction

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I am not proposing a return to the Stone Age. My intent is not reactionary, nor even conservative, but simply subversive. It seems that the utopian imagination is trapped, like capitalism and industrialism and the human population, in a one-way future consisting only of growth. All I'm trying to do is figure out how to put a pig on the tracks.

- Ursula K. Le Guin

1 Exploring counter-hegemonic practices (with)in politics, economies and knowledges

In her reflections on the 'Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins', Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (2015) sketches out flawed assumptions around modernity and human progress. She calls the concept of Anthropocene a "bundle of aspirations, which one might call the modern human conceit" and asks if we "can live inside this regime of the human and still exceed it?" (Lowenhaupt Tsing 2015, 19). The question of whether we can think of alternatives to hegemonic models of the economy, politics and knowledge whilst living and being entangled in, through counter-hegemonic practices from different geographical locations.[2] It does so in response to a) the assumption that counter-hegemonic alternatives cannot flourish in existing dominant structures and to b) the critique that the vagueness of a positive program and the scarcity of studies about lived postdevelopmental experiences constitute a key challenge for Postdevelopment (PD) theorising and aspired and actual practice (Matthews 2010, 18). In analysing counter-hegemonic practices, by which I understand alternatives *to* 'development'[3], I am careful

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[2] See p.10 for further clarification on what I here understand as 'counter-hegemonic'.

[3] 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. Escobar, among many other scholars, has 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. While there is heterogeneity in what comes to be subsumed as Postdevelopment alternatives, what they have in common is a fundamental questioning of core features of the prevalent 'development' discourse such as: (1) the focus on economic growth, productivism, a rhetoric of progress, anthropocentrism, capitalism, rationalism, individualism; (2) Alternatives

not to assume the existence of pure or untainted ways of life. Idealising the 'noble savage' (Kiely 1999) is a critique that is often raised towards (populist) formulations of PD. In seeking to uncover a counter-hegemonic, non-Westernized way of living, many attempts are prone to a simplistic and essentialist binary of thinking in terms of local/global, noble/evil, traditional/modern. Quite in contrast, practices of (Post-)'development' are more complex, layered and intersecting (Schöneberg 2021). Contemporary societies and politics are inevitably interlinked, both across space and through time. A way of living or structuring societal relations that is untouched by modernity can simply not occur. Nevertheless, counter-hegemonic practices that challenge the way of living commonly proclaimed as universal are existing and alive, albeit enacting their resistances on different layers, and with various political strategies and designs. These strategies and designs can be carried out in the name of progress and the improvement of people's conditions, in the name of social justice, systemic contestations, and pluriversal transitions, and at the intersections of several of such layers (Escobar 2020).

In this paper I will look at concrete social and political practices that can be understood as practiced resistances *to* 'development', i.e. as counter-hegemonic alternatives. These might also occur on several layers. The analysis is structured along three main questions. The main focus will be placed on the first question.

> **Do practices considered as counter-hegemonic and non-Western indeed go beyond Western models? If so, in what dimensions and to what extent?**

Here, I depart from the assumption that the hegemonic model can be taken to mean the following, structured along the arenas of the politics, economy and knowledge.

"In the **economic realm**, the hegemonic can be assumed to mean:
- private property and enterprise,
- wage labour,
- production for and transactions on the market,

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to the Western homogenizing model and the dominance of a framing of development-as-progress in the spheres of knowledge, society, politics; (3) Counter-terms involving a multiplicity of systemic critiques and suggestions of different ways of living (Schöneberg 2021, 10). The analysis of counter-hegemonic practices with(in) politics, economies and knowledges departs from this common critique.

Essentially, the hegemonic economic model is based on competition and utility maximization (Gibson-Graham 2005).

In the **political realm**, the hegemonic mode describes:
- a multi-party electoral system with professional representatives,
- excluding the sphere of production,
- nation-states as constitutive units in the area of politics (Lummis 1996).

In terms of **knowledge**, it describes practices:
- based on Cartesian rationality (the individual perceiving the world and analysing it by dissecting it into its parts),
- as well as Baconian science (separation between researcher as subject and nature as object which has to be understood in order to be subdued),
- and leading to an anthropocentric cosmology and ontology and a positivist epistemology and methodology in the area of knowledge (Nandy 1992)"

(all criteria from Ziai 2018)

Further, I will attempt to respond to the following two questions:

> **To what extent have counter-hegemonic practices been able to improve the livelihoods of certain groups?[4] Could these practices be generalised?**

> **What about possible bias in the selection and representation of PD practices? Are practices with politically reactionary implications which confirm to the PD criteria also mentioned in the literature? And if so: how are they represented?**

In exploring different pockets of resistances, I am drawing on Santos' theory of monoculture and absences and Quijano's theory on coloniality of power, as well as Escobar's proposition of pluriversal politics.

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[4] Counter-hegemonic practices must not necessarily be aimed at improving livelihoods, they could, especially in the realm of knowledges, have a spiritual or intellectual dimension. However, in the context of 'development' and especially alternatives *to* 'development', I am particularly interested in exploring livelihoods.

2 Theoretical frames: Non-existence, monocultures, and counter-hegemonic resistances

To understand what could be counter-hegemonic modes and models in the spheres of the economy, politics and knowledge I approach them as twofold: firstly, as counter practices to the productions of non-existence. Secondly, as forms of pluriversal politics.

With regard to the productions of non-existence, I depart from Santos' sociology of absences, through which he argues that "nonexistence is produced whenever a certain entity is disqualified and rendered invisible, unintelligible or irreversibly discardable" (Santos 2014, 172). Gibson-Graham (2010) build on Santos to argue that "developmental thinking has produced a sociology of absences" (Gibson-Graham 2010, 226).

Santos distinguishes five logics, or modes, of production of non-existence (Santos 2014, 172 - 175), which he terms monocultures. These are the

> *monoculture of knowledge and the rigor of knowledge*, which instates "modern science and high culture into the sole criteria of truth" (Santos 2014, 172). Non-existence is produced through dismissing everything as illegitimate that is not recognized by this canon.

> *monoculture of linear time,* which describes the "idea that history has a unique and well-known meaning and direction" (Santos 2014, 173). It produces a forward/backward binary, a "temporalization of spatial coexistence" (Melber 1992, 32) and "transformation of geocultural differences into historical stages" (Nandy 1992, 146). Non-existence is produced through "describing as backward whatever is asymmetrical vis-à-vis whatever is declared forward" (Santos 2014, 173).

> *monoculture of the naturalization of differences*, which "consists of distributing populations according to categories that naturalize hierarchies" (Santos 2014, 173). The two most decisive categories are sex and race. Non-existence is produced by rendering some people intrinsically and allegedly naturally as inferior. This divide is also "decisive for the relation between capital and labour" (Ibid.).

> *monoculture of logic of the dominant scale,* sets "universalism [as] the scale of the entities or realities that prevail regardless of specific contexts [and thereby] [...] take precedence over all other realities that depend on contexts and are therefore considered particular or vernacular" (Santos 2014, 174). Non-existence is produced through the divide of local/global, defining the local as insufficient vis-à-vis the global (i.e. the universal).

> *monoculture of the capitalist logic of productivity,* according to which "capitalist economic growth is an unquestionably rational objective" (Santos 2014, 174). It centres the criterion of productivity making it applicable both to nature as well as to humans. Non-existence is produced through framing non-productivity as failure.

Departing from these frames of non-existence gives orientation towards what, in contrast, can be considered counter-hegemonic modes and practices, which I understand as alternatives *to* 'development'. Assuming that these alternatives are necessarily pluriversal also means they can serve as a counter to the monocultures identified by Santos. In connection to Santos' absences, Anibal Quijano's conceptualisation of the 'coloniality of power' serves as a helpful tool for getting to the core of what is meant by demanding and thinking through counter-hegemonic alternatives, i.e. alternatives *to* 'development'. Quijano has traced the roots of current and persistent 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 (Quijano 2017). The coloniality of power is made up of a racialised regime of rule and a regime of exploitation. Within, 'development' continues to serve as an instrument linking these regimes. Alternatives must therefore aspire to break and overcome the structures and logics of power and exploitation, or, in Santos' words, the monocultures and absences that maintain them.

With regard to pluriversal politics, Escobar (2020) differentiates between pluriversal politics and modernist forms of politics. Modernist frames, those that I here understand as hegemonic, are 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 takes the 'West' as a yardstick for what is deemed 'developed', thereby legitimising imperial modes of living (Brand and Wissen 2019). Pluriversal politics are radically relational. Escobar frames them as a non-dualist, non-Cartesian way of viewing the world. 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. Counter-hegemonic visions and alternatives are likely to incorporate several layers. Pluriversal

politics, but also other strategies, such as systemic contestations, social justice struggles and modernist/neoliberal policies can be at play (Schöneberg 2021). Following Santos', Quijano's and Escobar's theoretical frames, alternatives *to* 'development' will be those that neither take Cartesian rationality, Baconian science, nor an anthropocentric cosmology and the primacy of capital and growth as an universalism. Rather, counter-hegemonic practices pose alternatives *to* 'development' in such way that they allow for a pluriverse of counter-hegemonic life worlds.

To further structure the analysis I will focus on modes and practices in the three areas of politics (Lummis 1996), knowledge (Esteva and Prakash 1998), economy (Gibson-Graham 2005). Ziai identifies broad entry points of social restructuring based on different, alternative, conceptions of the "economy (solidarity and reciprocity instead of *homo oeconomicus* and the world market), of politics (direct democracy instead of centralized authorities) and of knowledge (traditional knowledge systems instead of modern science)" (Ziai 2007, 5). Taking these as point of departure, the discussion and analysis that follows will take a look at lived and practiced examples in different geographical contexts, thereby attempting to explore spaces and opportunities, but also pitfalls and challenges. The analysis draws on examples from literatures that make reference to Postdevelopment and alternatives *to* 'development' and/or can be interpreted as such.

3 Alternative [non-capitalist, counter-hegemonic] conceptions of politics

Postdevelopment has been called a project with the potential for practiced radical democracy (Ziai 2004, 1057). As Postdevelopment is not at all a homogenous, it is important to differentiate between two main streams: neo-populist and sceptical postdevelopment. The former, generally speaking, promotes a rigid, statist and mostly essentialist understanding of cultures; whereas the latter is cautious to avoid promoting any kind of reversed universalism, rather attempting a differentiated critique of modernity while avoiding prescriptions on the shape of a more favourable society (Ziai 2004, 1054). This distinction is helpful in differentiating possible counter-hegemonic alternatives in the realm of politics from neoliberal strategies, especially when considering the role or retreat of states.

Thinking about counter-hegemonic alternatives first requires establishing in what way the current model (of politics) is hegemonic and what could be meant by counter-hegemonic strategies and practices. The scholar that has most fundamentally shaped conceptualisations of the term 'hegemony' is Antonio Gramsci. Unlike the contemporary liberal democratic conception that confines civil society to the NGO and non-profit sector working in complementarity to the state, Gramsci understands civil society as holding capacities to challenge existing institutions, structures and norms. Hegemony in Gramscian terms is "political leadership based on the consent by the diffusion and popularization of the world view of the ruling class" (Bates 1975, 352; Gramsci 1971, 12). In neo-Gramscian theory ideas of state hegemony have been extended to the transnational realm of international relations (Cox 1981).

I take as starting point to further explore hegemony/counter-hegemony the logics of capitalism[5] which have spread from "capitalist relations of production to the whole set of social relations and the subordination of the latter to the logic of production for profit" (Laclau/Mouffe 2001, 160). This is not only relevant for the realm of politics, with is the subject of this chapter, but for the whole discussion. Laclau and Mouffe identify the development of a new hegemonic formation which "articulated modifications at the level of the labour process, the form of the state and […] a profound transformation in the existing forms of social intercourse" (Laclau/Mouffe 2001, 60) and thereby essentially

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[5] Also see the next chapter on economy/economies.

impacted on all realms of society. This reorientation of labour and production resulted in the "destruction of the networks of traditional solidarity of a community or family type" (Laclau/Mouffe 2001, 161) making state-led interventions necessary to ensure the reproduction of the labour force. At the same time, and this emphasizes the entanglement of the state, politics and production, and is the reason why the three are central in this paper, the "intervention of the state at ever broader levels of social reproduction has been accompanied by a growing bureaucratization of its practices which has come to constitute, along with commodification, one of the fundamental sources of inequalities and conflicts" (Laclau/Mouffe 2001, 162). As a result "expansion of capitalist relations of production and of the new state-bureaucratic forms" (Laclau/Mouffe 2001, 162) are two sides of the same coin. In contrast and opposition, and as a strategy of counter-hegemony, radical and plural democracy would aim to "build a chain of equivalences among democratic struggles" (Laclau/Mouffe 2001, xix) ultimately with the aim of building a new, i.e. a counter, hegemony. In line with Laclau's argument that a vacuum of power is impossible, I use the term counter-hegemonic to describe alternatives to the current capitalist, racist, sexist ways of structuring the economy, politics and knowledges. According to Laclau, hegemony is not per se bad, but inevitable part of antagonisms in power relations and part of an "ongoing struggle that constitutes the social" (Worsham and Olson 1999, 6). Since there will never be a society entirely without power relations it is important to define antagonisms. This is also the reason why the differentiation between what is hegemonic, and what could be part of a counter hegemony, is important for the argument of this paper.

For the realm of politics, (counter-)hegemonic struggle requires the identification of 'floating signifiers', which are "open to continual contestation and articulation to radically different political projects" (Worsham and Olson 1999, 2). Democracy can be considered one of such signifiers. Democracy has been filled with meanings that are normatively good, but ultimately based on underlying state-centred and capitalist logics. It can be a term that essentially means nothing (Lummis 1996, 14). Also in terms of abilities to enact democratic rights, not every "political system that might be called democratic is sufficiently inclusive to allow for the realization of Indigenous rights" (Tockman 2017, 123). Here, sceptical Postdevelopment propositions can be seen in line with pluralist demands of radical democracy (Ziai 2004, 1056; Lummis 1996). As a consequence, one concrete proposition made by sceptical postdevelopment proponents

is a radical decentralisation of existing power structures, especially in terms of political representation (Ziai 2004, 1056).

Following from that, the ideal of a counter-hegemonic political model implies a radical democracy that goes beyond popular votes and referenda (such as in Switzerland), citizen/community councils (such as in Ireland), or participatory budgeting initiatives. Regardless of an emphasis on municipal, regional or federal structures, these ideas remain based on the nation state as constitutive unit in the arena of politics and are mostly rooted in a multi-party electoral system with professional representatives. What is evident is the exclusion of the sphere of production in the hegemonic model of politics. Politics and economy are considered separate. In contrast, I want to propose that economy and politics are so much entangled that thinking about any kind of counter-hegemonic alternative inevitably necessitates their conjunction.[6] In what follows I will be departing from the argument sketched above. The current hegemonic model is considered problematic because it not only neglects these entanglements, but also people's agency in shaping decision-making that impacts them individually and society as a whole.[7] Taking this as a starting point implies that a counter-hegemonic alternative will be one that prevents the concentration and centralisation of power through capital and state institutions.

3.1 What are practiced alternatives?

Two most prominent examples for place-based and localised politics are the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), known as Rojava, and the Zapatista communities in the Mexican state of Chiapas. Nevertheless, there are plenty alternatives in many other parts of the world, on which I can only put a flashlight view here.[8]

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[6] And knowledge, as will be argued below and has been highlighted by Laclau/Mouffe. According to them, epistemological representation, which becomes a legitimation for political representation, is hegemonic, because it is based universal prescriptions of reality and a false dichotomy of society and individual (Laclau/Mouffe 2001, 184). However, as assumptions and agreements around epistemology are somewhat overarching I will look at politics and economy first, before exploring how an understanding of pluriversal knowledges can fit in.

[7] To claim there are no entanglements in the hegemonic model might be misleading, especially considering the role of multinational corporations that, through their lobbying weight seek to influence politics and policy-making, oftentimes with success. However, in contrast and fundamental difference to this very concentrated corporate power is the demand for people's agency that understands production, ownership and the distribution of surplus as part of a political process.

[8] As an example, the Vikalp Sangam space highlights and maps myriads of 'alternative confluences' that are existent in India alone: https://vikalpsangam.org/about/

According to Article 39 of the Mexican constitution "people have the right to modify their form of government" (Leyva-Solano 2019, 336). The Zapatista communities take this as point of departure for their model of autonomy and self-government. A necessary step is the "liberation of territory from the state" to provide spaces "both economically, in the form of land and resources, and politically, in the form of autonomy from state control—for the elaboration of local democratic authorities" (Fitzwater 2019, 27). The Zapatista communities do not believe that a "dignified life would miraculously emerge from economic redistribution, nor from an idealized version of a unified indigenous community liberated from state control, but rather through the creation of locally determined democratic structures that would begin to overcome the internal oppressions within the community and set in motion the long task of building a government that in their words "governs by obeying" (Fitzwater 2019, 28). Zapatista democracy in that sense can be understood as a "democracy of democratic forms, with the definition of democracy itself the product of a constant process of creation and re-creation" (Fitzwater 2019, 158). The proposed and practiced system of governance is based on *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* (Good Government Council) who "displace and replace the state through administering justice, delivering health and education to the impoverished and neglected communities of Chiapas" (Dinerstein and Deneulin 2012, 8).

The project of implementing 'libertarian municipalism' (Cemgil and Hoffmann 2016, 53), in the territory of Rojava takes place in the context of the ongoing Syrian civil war. Driven by the northern Syrian Kurdish political movement it is inspired by critical writings on capitalist modernity of former Kurdish Workers' party (PKK) leader Abdullah Öcalan[9] as well as by Murray Bookchin's ideas on eco-anarchism and social ecology (Azlan and Akbulut 2019, 151). In Üstündağ's interpretation, the core of Öcalan's vision is to "develop a Gramscian counterhegemonic theory and a vocabulary that could encompass the historical and contemporary discontent […] in the aftermath of colonialism, the founding of nation-states, and the deepening of capitalism" with its core values being grounded in ecology, radical democracy and feminism (Üstündağ 2016, 198). Democratic autonomy is a central concept incorporating not only communal decision-making, but also an organizing across different societal fields such as "law, self-defence, diplomacy,

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[9] Öcalan's role as a political leader and symbolic figure is not uncontested. Ranging between visionary freedom fighter and terrorist, his person serves as "empty signifier of freedom, liberation and decolonization for Kurds" at same time as "his political project is one that can be classified as decolonial and as having a radical democratic aim". cf. https://globalsocialtheory.org/thinkers/ocalan-abdullah/

culture, and ecology" (Azlan and Akbulut 2019, 151). Furthermore, democratic autonomy is inextricably intertwined with democratic confederalism and democratic economy in the Rojava vision of a "local, anti-authoritarian, anti-hierarchical and communitarian approach" (Cemgil and Hoffmann 2016, 54). Decision-making is structured in communal and participatory councils along themes and regional levels. This includes the collective decision-making and organisation of a non-accumulationist economy, the management of commons (through energy cooperatives and water councils) and social reproduction, along with the provision of land access to landless families (Azlan and Akbulut 2019, 151). Similarly to the Zapatista vision, what is especially noteworthy is the Rojava ideal of a 'stateless democracy'. The aim of achieving an autonomous economy is closely interlinked with democratic autonomy in that it "aims to organize the production of goods and services communally in order to pre-empt the functionality of the state" (Azlan and Akbulut 2019, 153). Strategies in Rojava and by the Zapatista are very similar in this sense. Nevertheless, considering Rojava vision and practice as a possible counter-hegemonic alternative, it is at least noteworthy that Rojava remains a "contested frontline" and that claims of statelessness made by the autonomous administration need to be considered in the context of Syria's many "fragmented sovereignties" (Galvan-Alvarez 2020, 192). Similarly, the question of resistance and violence is an important one for further discussion in the context of imagining and practicing counter-hegemonic alternatives, not only in the Syrian context: Is it possible to achieve and maintain alternative practices without using violence? How can radical democracy be (peacefully) defended against "attacks of capital, state and patriarchy" (Üstündağ 2016, 197)?

Other examples for non-capitalist, non-hegemonic practices can be found in many places (Colombia, Ecuador and India to name but a few, and as discussed further below). As an example, in the context of the Vikalp Sangam process, Kothari proposes principles subsumed as Radical Ecological Democracy (RED, or also eco-swaraj), partly drawing on the Gandhian concept of self-rule and self-government, rejection of modernity and the nation state. In emphasizing a common understanding of ecological wisdom and resilience, social well-being and justice, radical political and economic democracy, 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.

In the context of Colombia, Uribe de Hincapié describes the relation between threatened sovereignty and social self-determination through referencing the struggle fought by people of the community San José de Apartdadó. As Uribe de Hincapié argues, drawing on Hannah Arendt, "self-determination has to do with a given social group's ability to emancipate itself from hegemonic [...] powers" (Uribe de Hincapié 2005, 282). This emancipation might not longer be state-centred, "but de-centred with multiple nodal points" (Ibid.). In the context of San José de Apartdadó this (especially peasant) struggle was visible through the "Declaration of the Community of Peace", which included the collective organization of production through work and community committees, claiming land, with the main ethical foundations of communal life being solidarity, freedom and transparency (Uribe de Hincapié 2005, 298-302).

In Ecuador, Miriam Lang suggests "plurinationality as a strategy to transforming local state institutions toward Buen Vivir" (Lang 2019, 176). Lang raises the question to what extent alternatives (to 'development'), not only, but especially in the realm of politics can involve a state. The inclusion of Buen Vivir in Ecuador's constitution in 2008 had been much celebrated at the time. However, in the years following there has been disenchantment with the political instrumentalization and co-optation of its contents. Returning to the roots of the concept, Buen Vivir can be understood a set of cosmologies, originating from indigenous peoples in Abya Yala, that is in fundamental opposition to the logics of individualism, competition and *homo oeconomicus.* Quite in contrast, collectivity, solidarity and interrelationality are promoted that make the division of societal life into different realms (politics, economy, society) futile (Lang 2019, 177). While the inclusion of Buen Vivir in the constitution seemed to hold momentum for reforming state institutions and structures, what happened was that the once revolutionary concept was "subjected to the efficiency and management logics of the neoliberal state" (Lang 2019, 178), the legitimation for extractivism drawn from the concept only being one example. Nevertheless, one can argue that this kind of state institutionalisation is only one level and that communitarian logics can still be expanded through the practice of plurinationality and municipality on local and regional levels. To give just two examples, in the municipalities of Cayambe and Nabón, solidarity communal work (*minga*), participatory budgeting, assembly-based forms of decision-making, especially on the administration of public goods and communal care for commons (such as with water system management), were emphasized and further institutionalized, even in urban areas (Lang 2019, 181-

182). While one could argue that the retraction of state services is nothing more than a neoliberal strategy of privatization, there is a fundamental difference in that the communisation of public goods and services moves the responsibility to a shared, municipal level rather than leaving it with the individual. The precondition for this kind of communitarian politics is very clear: it requires a simultaneous strategy of commoning within the economic realm, both in terms of material resources and the protection against private profit interests, as well as regarding care, community and political work.

3.2 Transforming power

The alternative political practices sketched above are vastly different in their contextualisation and the degrees to which alternatives have to be (violently) defended. Nevertheless, there are some core aspects that can be drawn from the analysis above:

- the question of what the state is and entails, whether the (nation) state needs to be abandoned, or can be transformed according to ideas of localisation, municipalism, decentralisation, and plurinationalism;

- the importance of collective decision-making, especially in the context of place-based localised structures/ struggles/ institutions/ alternatives (localism, municipalism and territorialism);

- the entanglement of radical democracy with a democratic economy

Two concepts are central in these questions: firstly, power *of*, *over* and *to*, especially with regard to decision-making and economic accumulation, and secondly, the state as a construct and institution. If democracy is merely a floating signifier then its meaning – power of the people – also remains a floating concept unless core questions are addressed: "Who are the people? What is power? Should the people have the power? How could such situation be arranged? By what set of institutions could it be guaranteed?" (Lummis 1996, 22). If these questions are not addressed, democracy remains theoretical. If the hegemonic model of politics claims democracy as its principle, then 'radical' can serve as an important modifier to clarify what democracy signifies in a counter-hegemonic sense, beyond representation and state-centred institutions: it means "democracy in its essential form, democracy at its root" (Lummis 1996, 25).

Kothari (2020) calls for forms of anarchic people-centred power. Here, there are obvious connecting points with previous conceptualisations of Postdevelopment. As has been argued, Postdevelopment can be understood as an anarchist strategy (Schöneberg 2021). The core being an outright rejection of the state as organizing and disciplining entity and an inseparable interconnectedness of liberty and equality that cannot be realised within restrictive and restricting state boundaries (Neusiedl 2019, 2) as well as the principles of self-organization, voluntary association and mutual aid (Graeber 2004, 3). Thinking Postdevelopment from with an anarchist lens more explicitly politicizes the nexus of power/knowledge, sovereignty/autonomy, relationality/individualism (Schöneberg 2021), which, as we see from the three points above, is central in any theorizing, and practice, of counter-hegemonic alternatives in the realm of politics.

Taking anarchist demands seriously implies the absolute imperative for collective decision-making, which not only ensures equal participation of all, but also prevents the concentration of power with some (people or institutions). Despite their diversity the different models and structures highlight the collective political subject "whose right to participate and be represented cannot be contained within the strictly liberal strategies that serially aggregate the rational preferences of putatively autonomous individuals" (Tockman 2017, 131). Decisions are not made in individual capacity at the ballot and further delegated to representatives, but through participation and processes of reaching consensus in assemblies. Radical democracy is not an abdication of state functions to the realm of civil society as practiced in a neoliberal logic, but an attempt to overcome it, the ideal being a 'state of statelessness' (Kothari 2020).[10]

As with any question of fundamentally transforming existent structures, the question arises of where and how radical democracy can be practiced. The examples above show that there are spaces existent. Although there is a fundamental difference between radical democracy and communitarian politics on the one hand, and modes of liberal, representative and participatory democracy, it does not mean that coexistence or demo-versity, as Santos and Avritzer call it, is impossible.[11] They claim that a loss of demo-

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[10] Kothari imagines this 'state of statelessness' not as chaos and non-governance, but as a multitude of "self-governing units, autonomous and self-reliant but also responsible for the autonomy and self-reliance of others (which necessarily means limits to consumption, and behaviour oriented towards respecting the commons) (Kothari 2020). This links directly to the conditions needed for a pluriverse ('a world in which many worlds fit') in a sense of pluriversal/postdevelopmental politics.

[11] I understand demo-versity as an element of pluriversality contributing to the vision of equality and justice that is the precondition for 'a world in which many worlds' fit. Forms of radical democracy and self-rule are inherent part of this.

versity has occurred since the 1960s and with the promotion of the low-intensity liberal democracy as the one desirable form of democracy, especially in line with conditionalities attached to loans by the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (Santos and Avritzer 2005, lxiii). The promotion was especially favoured because alongside neoliberal globalization the "rise of the brand of capitalism held the economic realm to be beyond democratic considerations" (Tockman 2017, 133) at the same time as accountability of political representation has decreased. What Santos and Avritzer argue in opposition is that any aspiration for a counter-hegemonic form of democracy must be one of democratizing democracy (Santos and Avritzer 2005, lxii).

What is central in discussing counter-hegemonic models of politics are its entanglements, both with the realms of the economy and knowledge, but also between the local and the global. If delegation of decision-making leads to unwanted centralisation of power, then direct interactions are core. The precondition is not only that everyone has the right to participate, but also that fora of decision-making are accessible (Kothari 2020). This assigns special importance to place and space and, more specifically, to municipalism and territoriality and counters *the monoculture of the logic of the dominant scale* (Santos 2014).

It is important to point out that not all ideas emphasizing localism or municipalism necessarily argue for the abandonment of the state in its entirety. As an example, while Cupples, Glynn and Larios (2007) are also strongly arguing for a radical place-based politics, they allow and account for a stronger role of the state than the Zapatista and Rojava models. Illustrating this on a case study from Nicaragua, Cupples et al. challenge the assumption that civil society and state are separated and that the state as entity of political governance must be overcome. The central question seems to be what is understood as the state. The Zapatista also seek to build an alternative working as 'state', which, while using the terminology is entirely different in its outset. An important aspect of the Zapatista practice is the aim not to "seize state power but to construct a new world within many other worlds" (Dinerstein/Deneulin 2012, 7). The vision here is to transcend the state and build different structures entirely. In that sense the Zapatista cannot

> "be categorized as a social movement or an example of participatory development. They do not seek to participate in the poverty reduction activities of the state and its policies. […] The Zapatistas do not demand another 'distribution of power' at the political level and/or a redistribution of resources and opportunities. [They]

are driven by a desire to create something new altogether." (Dinerstein/Deneulin 2012, 9).

Cupples et al. take a different stance in terms of the role of civil society and non-state actors in political decision-making, assuming that through CSO involvement state bodies can act more efficiently. "No matter how produced by the global" state and society are, there can be placed-based localised practices, who can be understood as "still globalizing and transnational discourses, but grounded in a local sense of belonging" (Cupples at al 2007, 796). They argue that "the projection of place into (global) space can similarly exert a destabilizing force against the certitudes, rigidities, and fixities that neoliberal common sense strives to engender" (Cupples at al. 2007, 798).

To conclude, the question of a counter-hegemonic model of politics becomes "not whether or not there is power, but which relationships of power are acceptable and which are unacceptable" (May 2012). Rather than dreaming up a global universalism of the most desirable form of governance, the model of a multitude of self-reliant, self-governing units seems the form of politics that most complies to criteria on what can be a postdevelopmental and counter-hegemonic practice of politics (Ziai 2007). On the one hand, it allows for pluriversity and diversity of different units, that do not have to subsume under the larger universalising umbrella of 'the state'. On the other hand, it emphasizes that units cannot exist entirely separated from each other, but are existent in a shared space that needs to give all the chance to flourish. Working towards this form of counter-hegemonic and pluriversal politics, among other things, requires the connection among various democratic struggles, where people and communities experiencing different forms of subordination and oppression unite.[12] Representative democracy essentially denies spaces that enable this, because it works according to differential and not equivalential logics.[13]

What has only been marginally touched upon so far are questions of authoritarianism and co-optation in models of radical democracy. The ideal of a radical democracy in which all can participate assumes that all have equal access and voice and is prone to a certain essentialisation that considers (possibly romanticizes) all non-

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[12] Laclau and Mouffe use the terms subordination, domination and oppression synonymously (Laclau/Mouffe 2001, 153).
[13] I thank Juan Tellería for raising this point.

Western practices as essentially counter-hegemonic and free of structures of separation and oppression (patriarchism, sexism, classism, casteism, to name just a few). The fact that power is always existent only applies to relations between communities, but also within. I will return to this aspect later when analysing to what extent politically reactionary implications are sufficiently taken up in discussions about postdevelopmental alternatives. If democracy is essentially a floating or even empty signifier it depends on the counter-/hegemonic power to fill it with content. Lummis emphasizes the importance to insist that "the word 'democracy' be used only to describe democratic things" (Lummis 1996, 15).

Nevertheless, what has become apparent from the discussion above is that alternatives to a representative model of democracy and especially to the nation state as the only constitutive unit in the arena of politics are existing and are practiced. These can be considered as counter-hegemonic and showing pathways beyond Western models in the sense that they have questioned centralized authorities and placed emphasis on autonomy and direct decision-making. However, self-rule and deep participation inevitably requires time and engagement of the people. It is difficult to imagine this in a setting where people are forced to wage labour (oftentimes in precarious circumstances) for the vast majority of their days to secure a meagre livelihood. It is obvious that any form of counter-hegemonic self-rule and autonomy imaginable is dependant on the circumstances of labour and production. In other words, practicing counter-hegemonic politics without a counter-hegemonic economic model seems impossible.

4 Alternative [non-capitalist, counter-hegemonic] conceptions of economy/economies

To start off exploring the field of economics first of all requires a closer definition of what is meant when speaking of alternative economic conceptions. Departing from Ziai (2007) and leaning on Gibson-Graham (1996, 2005) and Escobar (2008) I want to further specify some frames for analysis. Gibson-Graham attempt to comprehensively describe practices of non-capitalist economies. While the Postdevelopment literature is strong in calling for alternative practices very often this illustrated very vaguely empirically. Gibson-Graham's

important contribution to the literatures of alternative economy/economies is their insistence that 'diverse economies' are existing (Gibson-Graham 1996, 2005). They expose how the dominant Capitalocentric discourse assigns such power and hegemony to capital(ism) so that it becomes *the* only imaginable and defining organizing principle (Curry 2013, 413; Escobar 2008, 74). Escobar joins them in asserting that neither should *the* economy be taken for granted, nor are all forms of economies necessarily capitalist (Escobar 2008, 72). What needs to be contested is the idea of 'the economy' in the singular. Gibson-Graham (2005) propose the existence of diverse economies beyond the market. They argue that the problem with the Capitalocene, and consequently with 'development' as one of its drivers, is its narrow logic focussing on the "singular vision that the only viable economy is a capitalist one and that the only dynamics that will produce economic development are those of capitalist productivity – production of commodities for the global market, capital accumulation and export led growth" (Gibson-Graham 2005, 12). From that point of view, non-capitalist economies must be understood as a plurality, and as counterpoint to the claimed universality of 'the' capitalist economy. Departing from there also makes necessary to debate what 'economy' can entail otherwise, beyond the capitalist focus on production and consumption. Defined more broadly, economic activity could be understood as "labouring activity to provide goods and services to satisfy human needs" (Wright 2010, 36). In the logic of this definition the "exclusion of nonmonetized activity is arbitrary and distorting" (Curchin 2019, 164). In this regard, Gibson-Graham propose a rearrangement of what kind of economic relations are, could or even should be deemed valuable. They propose three sets of economic relations: "*transaction* of goods, services and finances; the performance and modes of remuneration of *labour;* and the production appropriation and distribution of surplus within different kinds of *enterprise*" [italics in original] (Gibson-Graham 2005, 12).[14] Gibson-Graham's propositions are aimed at designing a mode of economic action that is non-exploitative and non-extractive. This interlinks with Postdevelopment demands to

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[14] In terms of market transaction they differentiate between an alternative market (including fair trade markets, alternative currencies, cooperatives, informal markets and more) and non-market transactions (such es gifts, state provisions, indigenous exchanges, but also theft and poaching). With regard to wage labour, their differentiation is between alternative pay (in kind, reciprocal, cooperative) and unpaid (care and reproductive work, volunteering, unfree labour). Finally, capitalist enterprises are differentiated between alternative capitalist (state enterprise, green capitalist, non-profit) and non-capitalist (communal, independent) (summary from table Gibson-Graham 2005, 12). In this last non-capitalist enterprise column they also include feudal/peasant and slave work, a categorization I consider problematic. Feudalism and unfree labour/slavery may not be (appropriately) remunerated, nevertheless it has been (and in some cases continues to be) a fundamental pillar of capitalist growth and expansion.

uncover non-Western, counter-hegemonic modes of existing and exchanging. Gibson-Graham emphasize that from their point of view Postdevelopment is not anti-development. Rather, their alternative story of development could mean a de-linking from the all-encompassing 'single story'[15] of industrial growth and capitalist expansion. Postdevelopment economic practices "de-essentialize economic logics as the motor of history" thereby undermining the "hierarchical valuation of cultures, practices and places" (Gibson-Graham 2010, 226). They illustrate the "deconstructive project of post-development thinking" with insights from action research on the Philippines (Gibson-Graham 2005), in Spain and Canada (Gibson-Graham 2010) . This deconstructive project has four main pillars. It

- "unhinges notions of development from the European experience of industrial growth and *capitalist expansion*,

- decentres conceptions of economy and de-essentializes economic logics as the motor of history,

- loosens the discursive grip of unilinear trajectories on narratives of change, and

- undermines the hierarchical valuation of cultures, practices and places."

(Gibson-Graham 2010, 226)

Curchin, drawing on explorations in remote indigenous Australia, proposes that there are alternative or at least hybrid economic models that do not "envisage the sudden elimination of either the market or the state, but rather make space for other governing logics, thereby enabling indigenous people to fashion livelihoods that enable them to live on or close to their ancestral lands" (Curchin 2019, 163). The question is whether we can think of economic hybridity as a model making a contribution to Postdevelopment. This brings us back to the distinction between reform and transformation that the editors of the 'Pluriverse' (Kothari et al. 2019) make among others, claiming, and cautioning, that reform of hegemonic systems and structures entails their upholding and maintenance. At the same time, (counter-hegemonic) alternatives can never be thought in an entire vacuum. Even communities in remote areas are shaped by a "mix of customary and

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[15] As coined by Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie.

western (global) social norms and values" (Altman 2009b, 7) and local economies are never to be seen in an entirely dualistic contrasting between modern/Western-traditional/local or capitalist/subsistence (Escobar 2008, 72). But to what extent can the ideas and practices of economic hybridity and/or diverse economies go beyond capitalocentric models, and in which dimensions? Can alternative conceptions resist or are they eventually co-opted?

4.1 What are practiced alternatives?

Taking Gibson-Graham's and Escobar's theoretical groundings of 'diverse economies', and their conviction that non-capitalist practices are existent and flourishing, as point of departure, what seems to be central in analysing possible alternatives to capitalism - or, to capitalist *practices*, as Gibson contends[16] - I want to look at country specific examples considering different approaches to alternatives: 1) gift economy, 2) cooperative economy, 3) solidarity economy and 4) hybrid economy. The goal is not to provide a comprehensive mapping of counter-hegemonic economic practices globally, but to find a diversity of practices making use of cracks in the hegemonic model and providing alternative visions to the *monoculture of the capitalist logic of productivity* (Santos 2014). The aim is to exemplary explore the "possibility of excavating histories of postdevelopment" (Curchin 2019, 171) by way of untangling different social realities from capitalism and considering communal forms of production and exchange as possible practiced diverse economies (Escobar 2008, 72, 74).

Starting off with **gift economy**, I am drawing on Curry (2003) and his case study of smallholder oil-palm production in Papua New Guinea. Curry explores how local place-based nonmarket practices claim spaces in the market economy (in this case in the oil-palm production industry) and may have the potential to transform the latter. In line with Gibson-Graham's propositions and Polanyi's idea of the social embeddedness[17] of economies, he departs from the assumption that non-capitalist economic practices,

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[16] In a talk at Sussex Global (6 May 2021), Katherine Gibson insisted that in order to be able to think of alternatives it is important to avoid the "holistic totality" that is reinstated through framing capitalist actions with an -ism. Rather, she suggested to reject an inside/outside dualism and focus on capitalist practices versus non-capitalist practices. In that sense, non-capitalist practices are possible and thinkable in any circumstance and do not require the antecedent overthrow of capitalism as such.

[17] As explained by economist Joseph Stiglitz in his introduction to Polanyi's 'The Great Transformation', the term "embeddedness" expresses the idea that the economy is not "autonomous, as it must be in economic theory, but subordinated to politics, religion, and social relations" (xxiv).

specifically through smallholder relationships, exist (Polanyi 2001; Curry 2003, 406). Curry supports his hypothesis by contrasting the logics of gift and commodity exchanges. While the exchange of commodities is non-social and non-personal, in a gift exchange "the objects of exchange are inalienable in the sense that gifts often embody some obligations that alter the relationship between the parties to the transaction" (Curry 2003, 407). In the context of Papua New Guinea, Curry sees 'alternative modernities' arising from the social embeddedness of a context where smallholder farmers produce oil palm for large international corporations. In his study, Curry observes the impact of social obligations and gift exchange on monthly production totals. Giving the example of one smallholder taking responsibility to contribute to bride-price payments for his brother's sons, he finds that the "extended kinship group was mobilized to engage in oil-palm production to fulfil the requirements of the indigenous exchange economy" (Curry 2003, 415). Curry puts forward an "alternative modernity arising from the interplay of different economic logics in which place-based social and economic practices are important" (Curry 2003, 410). The example given implies no full subscription of farmers to the market economy, but an engagement in the cash/market economy (which I understand here as the hegemonic economic model), which is "partly determined by the level of activity in the indigenous exchange economy, which can fluctuate in response to major life events" (Curry 2003, 416) and income opportunities in the market economy (e.g. seasons and harvesting periods). The recurring question in analysing potential (non-)capitalist economic practices is whether 'traditional' or 'indigenous' economies such as gift exchange and commodity exchanges really are opposed. While people in Tonga, as described by Horan (2002), might desire wealth in the sense of Western quantifications (Western-styled house, entertainment devices, consumables), that does not exclude that other forms of wealth (e.g. ceremonies, gift exchanges) play an equally important role. Hooper and James (1994, as cited in Horan 2002, 215) observe that "people work and accumulate money not to escape from traditional obligations but rather to fulfil them effectively." Similarly to Papua New Guinean practices, in Tonga, indigenous exchanges work in complementarity to market exchanges. The Tongan notion of 'development', *Fakalakalaka*, differs from Western formulations of modernity and 'development' in that it encompasses more than material gain of material possessions, but a holistic vision of the individual, family and community relations (Horan 2002, 216).

A second alternative economic model is **cooperative economy**. Drawing on their case study of the Mondragón Cooperative Cooperation (MCC), Gibson-Graham (2010) view this example of a multi-sector cooperative economy as a possible Postdevelopment pathway. Founded in 1956, the corporation is now the largest company in the Basque country and the tenth-largest company in Spain. According to self-description the corporate values are intercooperation, corporate social responsibility, innovation, education and social transformation, all shaped by a cooperative identity.[18] To date, the company is divided into four business areas (finance, industry, retail, knowledge) and consists of 96 separate self-governing, autonomous cooperatives in which over 80,000 people are involved. Their over 140 production plants are located in 37 countries. Mainly, the MCC produces consumer goods such as automotive and engineering appliances, but also offers finance services through the Laboral Kutxa, a cooperative banking project. On first sight, Mondragón appears like a slightly more social enterprise that claims focus on participatory management and solidaristic organisation principles. However, what, according to Gibson-Graham (2010, 231), makes a fundamental difference to companies that pledge to follow some corporate social responsibility is what happens to surpluses generated by the cooperatives. Here, surpluses are pooled and then used to create and support new worker-owned cooperatives.

A third economic model to analyse is the example of **solidarity economy** and building of alternative trade relations. A prominent example are the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN). Being an organisation of indigenous political resistance fighters in the state of Chiapas in the South of Mexico, EZLN have become somewhat of a role model for contestations of neoliberal trade policies, capitalism, globalization, and the practice of autonomous self-government, especially, but not only, among indigenous groups. Self-Organisation and autonomy are at the core of their societal project, as has also become clear when considering non-hegemonic models in the political realm. While there is not enough space here for a complete analysis of EZLN practices, challenges and limitations[19] the economic models and their underlying assumptions are of particular interest for exploring possible non-hegemonic economic models. EZLN resistances generally and economic practices specifically arose in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a response and counter to the aims of the Mexican government to 'modernise' the economy and retract

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[18] https://www.mondragon-corporation.com/en/about-us/
[19] see e.g. Hayden 2002, Gerber 2005, Collier and Lowery Quaratiello 2005, Kerkeling 2006, Ehlers 2009, Barmeyer 2009 for more extensive discussions.

government involvement inline with internationally imposed austerity policies and the passing of NAFTA. Part of these policies were the dismissal of constitutional protection for indigenous lands, which placed the poorest of the poor in further precarity. Central in EZLN resistance strategy is the creation of a regional economy. Cultivation and export of coffee is an important part, which has had a tradition in Chiapas since the early 1900s. The model of autonomous solidarity economy and alternative trade as practiced by Zapatista communities is diverse, with subsistence and market production existing alongside each other, albeit independently of government subvention (Gilgenbach and Moser 2012, 17). The overarching principle for all forms of production is the collectivity of ownership, work and distribution of surplus (Híjar Gonzalez 2008, as cited in Gilgenbach and Moser 2012, 18). While cooperatives, especially those producing coffee for export are inevitably connected to the world market, it is claimed that the prime objective of production first and foremost is to satisfy the needs of the local population, at the same time being subjected to fluctuations in world market prices (Gilgenbach and Moser 2012, 19). On a theoretical level it can be said that EZLN resistance and alternative economic practices in the communities are very counter-hegemonic in their outset, recognizing that Zapatista action has commenced as an explicit resistance to the economic 'modernization' attempts of the Mexican government and the international community via structural adjustment programmes.

Fourthly, the model of **economic hybridity** (Curchin 2019, Altman 2009) considers practices of Australian Indigenous communities in remote settings, who are living on own land. These are assumed to be operating in the hybrid intersections of "customary, state and market sector" (Curchin 2013, 16) albeit neither of these sector exists in isolation, or in a 'pure' form. The core of economic hybridity is its fluidity and high variability, especially with fundamental differences concerning engagements with state and market between indigenous populations living on customary land and those living in the cities. Hybridity is described through "interactions and the distinctiveness of Aboriginal economic modes informed by an amalgam of Indigenous and western norms", in other words, interrelations and interactions between capitalist (i.e. market-based) and non-capitalist (i.e. kin-based) practices (Altman 2009b, 8). While the hegemonic economic model dismisses all customary and cultural practices as backward and hindering, the inclusion of a third, kinship-based and relational sector, in addition to the two-sector model of state and market, may offer a "vantage point from which to critique both the

hegemonic discourse of capitalist expansion and the punitive behavioural policy seeking to shift Indigenous norms" and possibly find alternative practices "in the cracks of capitalism" (Curchin 2019, 164). As an example, Indigenous Australians engagement in/with economic emphasise relationality, both to kin as well as to land and the natural environment. In valuing non-monetarised forms of exchange, the model of economic hybridity can be argued to "reclaim the concept of 'productivity' from neoliberalism, interpreting productivity as not about profitability, but about meaningful activity to provision a society" (Curchin 2019, 171). Practical interrelations of market, state and customary sector can be observed when cultural knowledge is used for hunting and fishing, to produce goods for sale to tourists, or for touristic performances, or where state subsidies are provided for Indigenous arts centres (Curchin 2013, 18-19). While the ownership of land and subsistence farming, hunting and fishing are the core basis in this model of indigenous economy, the importance of (long-term) state income support to indigenous community members cannot be neglected and provides one basis on which communities can afford engaging with cultural practices while knowing their livelihood secured.

What can be drawn from the examples given above? Looking at Ziai's criteria framing what constitutes hegemonic practices, the examples are ambiguous. Most practices illustrate neither a full rejection *of* the cash/market economy, nor of production *for* and transaction *on* the market. There were four main approaches: 1) gift economy, 2) cooperativism, 3) autonomous solidarity economy and 4) hybrid economic practices.

Gift economy exchanges reflect "cultural contestations that take place as Western capital and 'development' attempt to transform the lives of non-Western communities" (Horan 2002, 219). They highlight solidarity and reciprocity beyond logics of *homo oeconomicus* and place-based appropriations in which access and engagement with the market economy facilitates and possibly even enhances indigenous economic exchange practices. Likewise, **hybrid economic models** do not rule out market engagement. In fact, especially in the context of continuing, even increasing, mining activities in Australia generally and Indigenous land specifically, some Indigenous leaders seek further engagement as a means to gain and secure autonomy. Drawing a conclusion with the ideal of hegemonic contestation in mind is ambiguous. Production is clearly pursued for transaction on the market and utility maximization, but simultaneously legitimized with

the pursuit of sovereignty for the community and, through equal engagement with multilateral trajectories, contestation of essentialist notions of economy. Despite this, in the context of Postdevelopment the model of hybrid economies remains questionable, especially in relation to mining activities. A similar narrative of the need for mining to strengthen sovereignty and independence has been promoted by the Ecuadorian government within narratives of Buen Vivir. Here, indigenous concepts of (inter-)relation among humans and non-humans and promises of welfare have been co-opted by state actors to legitimize mining action and export production. If there is only a fine line between hybridity and co-option, then what are its markers? Is it even possible to find, or claim, some kind of 'pure' and non-hybrid alternative, without falling into pitfalls of puritanical and moralistic reasoning? Nevertheless, it is valid to ask to what extent, if at all, a hybrid economy approach poses a true contestation to the hegemonic i.e. capitalist model. This is especially relevant in a context where promises of consumerism, similarly to country cases described above, are attractive for the younger generation. In its outset economic hybridity seems not a radically transformative approach, but one that might be a survival strategy, or a means to maintain some kind of status quo. Nevertheless, this must not be a delegitimizing factor for non-capitalist practices being pursued 'in the cracks of capitalism'. Are **cooperative economic models** then, as Gibson-Graham have claimed, as a non-hegemonic postdevelopmental model of economic practicing? Again, the response is twofold. On the one hand, in the case of Mondragón, the enterprise is workers-owned and workers-led, meaning no private wealth accumulation is created. At the same time, the cooperatives of the corporation produce consumer goods for and transaction on the global market. In order for the corporation to flourish it sees itself conflicted by the apparent imperative for expansion to non-Basque and non-Spanish markets and absorption of capitalist and non-cooperative companies, making the "adherence to cooperative principles […] an ongoing struggle rather than a fait accompli" (Gibson-Graham 2010, 231). Noam Chomsky evaluates examples like the MCC and their potential for building alternative economic practices as rather limited, since despite being workers-owned, they remain in a system that produces for profit, rather than for use. In his view, as long as companies are "in a system where you must make profit in order to survive […] you are compelled to ignore negative externalities, [especially] effects on others."[20]

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[20] https://www.counterpunch.org/2012/04/30/talking-with-chomsky/

Despite of despite of their radical mission, Zapatista cooperative members recognize that a full decoupling from the global market is more an utopia than a fact. At the same time, members increasingly value the monetary income produced through these exports (ibid.). Gerber rejects the stereotype of localism (Gerber 2005, 154), rather than a retreat to the local he sees EZLN regional economies as a strategy of resistance. In that sense, rather than Zapatista economy being a roll-back to some idea of traditional frugality, members make demands for material wealth and to some extent these are satisfied. At the same time, at least at the ideological level, the EZLN vocally expresses criticism of globalised capitalism and neoliberalism, its structures of power and exploitation, the "war of money against humanity" (EZLN 2008, 246). Although different in the entirety of political claims, there is a common core point to the practices of Mondragón: cooperativism and the way how surplus is reinvested, which makes a fundamental difference to private property enterprise aimed at utility maximization for individual benefit and prosperity.

4.2 Unhinging the 'one economy'

Returning to the question of whether non-capitalist and non-Western practices in the economic realm are existing, this can be broadly confirmed. Albeit the more differentiated response must remain ambiguous and somewhat indecisive with regards to what is considered as a practice of social restructuring, and to what extent hybrid practices are, in Gibson-Graham's words, 'unhinging' and 'decentring'. The question is what are the limits and also potential challenges of imagining community economies in a very local context as a possible PD alternative within the economic realm. It could be that a myriad of small initiatives (and ideally in a way of a transnational network) are much more powerful and emancipatory than imagining a huge global systemic revolutionary overthrow. At the same time, small initiatives are under constant threat to become co-opted and incorporated into the capitalist system, or are even seeking such inclusion. There are some core questions to respond to for concluding this section about economic contestations.

The core point, as promoted by Gibson-Graham and others, but also as generally implied in the search for non-hegemonic models of economy, is the demand, and need, to disconnect theoretically and practically economy/economies from capitalism. The dilemma is that what Gibson-Graham describe as 'discourses of difference' always happen

in a hybrid space and cannot *not* engage with dominant models (Escobar 2008, 74). The examples described above have illustrated this and the difficulty of responding unambiguously to the question to what extent alternatives and practices are non-hegemonic, non-Western and postdevelopmental, and if they must be. Searching for counter-hegemonic alternatives might therefore mean moving away from the idea of an entirely detached, somewhat pure, form of economic alternative, especially seeing and recognizing that the ideal of 'pureness' is not viable, nor, possibly, desirable, in any context or sphere.

The issue of surplus distribution seems to be an important entry point for thinking further. Neither the Zapatista, Mondragón, Papua New Guinean, Tongan or Australian Indigenous communities entirely reject engagement *with*, production *for* and transaction *on* the global market. In contrast to what Ziai has described as solidarity and reciprocity *instead* of homo oeconomicus and the world market, there seem to be *simultaneous*, not necessarily contradictive, engagements in both spheres. The important difference to the logics of private property and individual utility maximization is the way surpluses are reinvested and channelled back to the community instead of the individual through systems of cooperativism or gift exchanges. Central points for this to work is some (albeit collective) ownership of land and/or access to commons, and the willingness and ability to engage into subsistence labour, as well as strong relational ties among community members. The hegemonic economic model is entirely individualistic, whereas community, diverse or hybrid economies are reliant on the centrality of relationality. Returning and directly linking to the realm of politics, one of three moral principles named by Wright and by which existing social structures and institutions are to be judged is democracy (among equality and sustainability). Due to the primacy of private property in a capitalist logic, "capitalism contradicts the full realization of democracy" (Wright 2013, 14). This becomes obvious both in the way that decisions can be solely justified on the grounds that they benefit the holder of property, regardless of whether others values of home and livelihood are violated as well as that private wealth is allowed to "affect access to political power" (Wright 2013, 14).

5 Alternative [non-Euro-modern, counter-hegemonic] conceptions of knowledges

As a starting point for analysing conceptions of counter hegemonic knowledges, and following up from the discussion above, I take Ziai's argument on the implications of a radical democratic/postdevelopmental imaginary. He argues that challenging political representation alone is not sufficient, but that contestations must also include epistemological representations (Ziai 2004, 1057).

The postdevelopment agenda should be understood as a set of strategies confronting coloniality (Schöneberg 2021, 49), not only but especially with regard to the validity of knowledges. This is adding to what Santos has framed as monoculture, absences and non-existences, especially regarding the *monoculture of knowledge and the rigor of knowledge*, and what Quijano more broadly summarises as 'coloniality of power' (Quijano 2017).[21] Melber exactly pinpoints the continuing legacies of coloniality in knowledge (production) when he states that until today "only certain knowledge is power, and that the power of definition is the decisive element. In other words: Not all that is based on knowledge counts, and not all that counts is based on knowledge" (Melber 2021). The reductionist narrative of modernity and progress, taken as legitimation for colonial rule and oppression, and later for intervention in the name of 'development' has resulted in a marginalisation of non-Western epistemologies and theorizations, not only, but especially in research and science (McDonnell 2003, 8). Sardar argues that "Eurocentrism is intrinsic in the way we think and conceptualize, […] inherent in the way we organize knowledge" (Sardar 1999, 49). In his view, Eurocentrism is deeply entrenched in all social science disciplines, which continue to be, despite some self-critical reflections, "geared to serving the needs and requirements of Western society" (Sardar 1999, 49). This very precisely describes the coloniality of knowledge production and legitimation. The question of knowledges in the plural is constitutive of breaking this hegemonic divide.

Contestations of hegemonic knowledge cannot be theorized without an openness to unfamiliar epistemological concepts and ontological frames, while being sensitive to and aware of the "problems of representation, interpretation, and translation between

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[21] see p.8.

different onto-epistemologies and cosmo-visions" (Ahenakew 2006, 330). The endeavour of pluralising epistemic representations is essentially one of "displacing the centrality of Western reasoning" (Ahenakew 2006, 337). In Arturo Escobar's words, "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" (Escobar 2020, xii).

Thinking about counter-hegemonic alternatives to 'development' necessitates a fundamental questioning of the universality of Cartesian rationality upon which European supremacy claims are founded. Cosmologies from India, several African countries, North America and the Andes demonstrate that nature-culture dichotomy, and its separation of subject-object and body-mind is far from being universal, but very much a Western construction (Schöneberg 2021; Apffel-Marglin 1996, 9). Western recurrence on Cartesian rationality, has enabled the pursuit of a capitalist logic in which nature, body and mind have become commodified. Essentially this has led to a hierarchical divide between commoditized and non-commoditized beings, "one being valued and visible, the other devalued and invisible" (Apffel-Marglin 1996, 10).

Again, as with the realm of politics and economies discussed above the equation between Western knowledge as always hegemonic and indigenous/local knowledges as always non-hegemonic is misleading. For obvious reasons laid out above, Western knowledge has mostly claimed superiority and universality, while purposely side-lining, marginalising and devaluing other knowledges. However, thinking and arguing for a counter-hegemonic model of knowledges does not mean doing away with Western knowledges entirely, it rather means to dismantle its self-proclaimed hegemony and put it in place as one of many knowledges. Kimmerer illustrates this with the example of gardens growing the 'three sisters' – corn, beans, and squash – and draws from centuries of wisdom from the Citizen Potawatomi Nation in Northern America (Kimmerer 2013, 128-131). Not only are all three plants very nutritional for humans and animals, they also grow best when planted in immediate proximity to each other because their growth cycles and biochemical processes complement and support each other. Colonialists, believing that cultivation should happen in straight rows, disavowed the seemingly unordered practices and knowledges according to which indigenous gardens were build, in favour of monocultures and plantations. These, however, drain the soil of nutrients and are prone to treatment with pesticides. The illustration fits perfectly to what Santos has put forward

in his 'sociology of absences'. In the Potawatomi understanding the gardening of the 'three sisters' is intrinsically logically: the growing of the three plants gives perfect illustration of reciprocity, cooperation, giving and taking of the individual for the whole to flourish (Kimmerer 2013, 134). The reason I am drawing on this here is not only that the story of cultivation reveals a very different understanding of knowing and being in relation with earth others than the hegemonic Western anthropocentric ontology. It also illustrates that monocultures, in any context, are poorer. As Kimmerer argues, the example of the 'three sisters' can offer a metaphor for an

> "emerging relationship between indigenous knowledge and Western science, both of which are rooted in the earth. I think of the corn as traditional ecological knowledge, the physical and spiritual framework that can guide the curious bean of sciences, which twines like a double helix. The squash creates the ethical habitat for coexistence and mutual flourishing. I envision a time when the intellectual monoculture of science will be replaced with a polyculture of complementary knowledges. And so all may be fed."

> (Kimmerer 2013, 139)

I want to approach this chapter somewhat differently than the parts on politics and economies. Rather than collecting case study examples, I want to shift to the ontological and epistemological levels of, what I assume, could be forms of counter-hegemonic knowledges, and attempt to sketch in how far they differ from hegemonic Western knowledge with its unquestioned acceptance and even ascribed superiority of Cartesian rationality, Baconian science principles, positivist epistemology and methodology as well as a fundamentally anthropocentric cosmology and ontology.[22] As a scholar writing in and from the Global North, about knowledges that are not familiar to me and only accessible through books and not by experience, this attempt will inevitably remain flawed and patchy, yet I hope to highlight the diversity of approaches beyond what is understood as the hegemonic knowledge and its universality. I use research and the production of knowledge synonymously, while assuming that both are not confined to the academe.

5.1 The monoculture and narrowness of expertise

Contestations of the assumed universality of Western i.e. hegemonic knowledge need to start with a deconstruction of the Western project of modernization (Sachs 2005) and the many forms of ideological and economic power of the West over the Rest (Hall 1992). The

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[22] For a discussion of a number of non-Western frames of knowing the world see Schöneberg 2021.

notion of the 'expert' and 'expert knowledge' is only a slight adjustment from the colonial narrative of trusteeship and still visible in contemporary science, research and 'development' practice (Cowen and Shenton 2003; Schöneberg 2019b, 98). At the same time, it is inherently a relational one, constituted through exclusion and recognition. Inevitably, expertise "implies a dichotomy between experts and non-experts and a knowledge differential that often runs alongside other social differentials: of power, privilege and prestige" (Evetts, Mieg, and Felt 2006, as cited in Mormina, Schöneberg, Narayanaswamy 2021,12). These differentials work to constitute an epistemic narrowing where only some knowledges and some speaker positions are deemed valid and relevant. To some extent this has become apparent in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, where knowledges from the Global South from dealings with epidemic diseases like Ebola were not drawn upon in European response frames. The divide of who is an expert and who is not remains firmly rooted in the dichotomies of nature-culture, subject-object, body-mind (Apffel-Marglin/Marglin 1996, 9) and ignores styles of cognition that are different to this. This very particular way of viewing the world, "rooted in historic processes of epistemic narrowing, [...] has become recognized as expert knowledge, simultaneously resulting in reification of an individualised extractive (neo-)liberalism and the delegitimization of knowledges that place emphasis on life in harmony and community with human and non-human beings " (Mormina, Schöneberg, Narayanaswamy 2021, 21). In thinking about hegemonic knowledge, especially, but not only with regard to 'development' it is "remarkable that the modern form [i.e. the Cartesian rational variant] is not only the knowledge system of the Western expert, but of experts in general, as well as that of government" (Apffel-Marglin/Marglin 1996, 11). In the context of 'development' this means that marginalisation is not always only exercised by the foreign 'experts', but also by local officials (Apffel-Marglin/Marglin 1996, 13). To explain the credibility deficit of other forms of knowledge, the notion of epistemic injustice is helpful, in which "someone is wronged specifically in her capacity as a knower" (Fricker 2007, 20).[23] Nevertheless, a reverse dichotomy about what would be *the* better knowledge is equally unproductive. For that reason, I will next attempt to sketch what could be understood as a counter-hegemonic approach to knowledge.

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[23] With regard to epistemic injustices Ndlovu-Gathsheni's work is very relevant. In this context see especially Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, 223.

5.2 What could be understood as a counter-hegemonic approach to knowledge?

Starting from the assumption that counter-hegemonic knowledge goes beyond the four paradigms raised by Ziai[24] makes it necessary to, at least attempt to, situate other knowledge systems beyond the Euro-modern. If it can be generalised at all, what seems to be common to most non-Western knowledge systems is the circularity of the elements (ontology, epistemology, methodology, axiology) of what Wilson calls an indigenous research paradigm (Wilson 2008, 70).[25] In contrast to the Cartesian rational tendency to dissect the world in parts in view and analyse it separately, Wilson's understanding of an indigenous knowledge system is to see all elements as circular and interrelated, "all parts of the circle are equal; no part can claim superiority over, or even exist without, the rest of the circle" (Wilson 2008, 70). What is the central underlying principle is relationality. Indigenous epistemology, as described by Wilson, is not merely about what the individual believes to be real, but about a relational kind of knowledge that "includes entire systems of knowledge and relationships" (Wilson 2008, 74). These relationships include people, the environment/the land, the cosmos, animals, plants and ideas (Wilson 2008, 84 et seqq.). This view is not unique to the Opaskwayak Cree Nation. The same is argued by Chilisa (2013), who is positioned as a member of the Bantu people. In laying out 'Indigenous Research Methodologies' she draws on experiences from her own people, but also from many other parts of the world, to argue that Euro-Western research processes force to disconnect indigenous social science researchers from multiple relations, living and non-living. In her view, the decolonisation of Western research methodologies is urgently needed. Chilisa understands decolonization as a "process of conducting research in such a way that the worldviews of those, who have suffered a long history of oppression and marginalization are given space to communicate from their frames of reference" (Chilisa 2013, 30). Of course, this communication must also allow for and involve contestation and conversation.

In line with this, and equally illustrative are the analogies for different sets of ways of knowing/being brought forward by Elwood Jimmy, Andreotti and Stein (2019). To describe different ways of being, knowing and communicating they draw on the distinction between bricks and threads and analogous thinking. In their understanding,

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[24] See p.6.
[25] Shawn Wilson writes from the positionality of a member of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation from northern Manitoba, as a father of three sons, a researcher, a son, uncle, teacher and knowledge seeker.

brick sense and sensibilities stand for "a set of ways of being that emphasize individuality, fixed form and linear time" (Jimmy, Andreotti and Stein 2019, 13). This is contrasted with *thread sense and sensibilities* which "emphasize interwovenness, shape-shifting flexibility and layered time" (ibid.), broadening sense and sensibility to every being (including human, non-human and land). The interwovenness means that not only can the world be experienced in more than one way, it also means that every entity is valued for its part in the whole. Again, the division between Western and non-Western/indigenous has fundamental caveats, mainly the fact that every community and every way of living and being has been touched by modernity and that there is no such thing as a 'pure' traditional or Western way of knowing or being.

The non-Western knowledge systems described above centre relationality, both with the human as well as the non-human environment, denouncing Euro-modern anthropocentric cosmology. The centrality of interwovenness and entanglement of relation makes it both impossible to dissect and separate parts of making sense of the world (or, in the academic realm: disciplines) as well as to exclude and detach oneself from it and assuming the supposedly neutral and objective role of the researcher. Obviously, the systems above are described theoretically. As an outsider speaking *about* there is always a danger of essentialising, which is why it is important to take a critical look at what is proclaimed and celebrated as more desirable from the position from which I am writing, and how this might homogenize and romanticize 'the traditional', 'the local' and 'the indigenous'.

'The South' or 'traditions from the South' often serve as a container to do exactly that. Resulting from discontent with the current global order and its divides it is very easy to dream up a somewhat more frugal, more authentic, more truthful way of living and project it towards people living a less industrialised life. Indeed, it is the tendency to romanticize poverty and subsistent ways of living in some postdevelopment writings (and from authors based in the global North) that is most often criticized. In fact, what postdevelopment has added to the analysis of global divides is, beyond the single focus on economic inequalities, addressing the 'problem of cultural inauthenticity'. While the problems and impacts of this universal design are obvious, as we have seen in terms of the *monoculture of knowledge* and epistemic narrowing, it would also be too easy to claim that non-Western ways of living simply need to be liberated in order for a good society to emerge. In the context of India, Nanda has critically observed how the rhetoric of the

global versus the local - the "presumably imperialistic, universal and abstract scientific knowledge of the West, and the presumably benign, situated and embodied knowledges of the non-Western people" (Nanda 1999, 6) - has been co-opted by national elites that utilise this anti-imperialist narrative for a populist, nationalist narrative. This narrative and rhetoric, rather than liberating the poor, and rather than resisting modernization, "serves the interests of those who are most keen and most able to join the modern world of profits" (Nanda 1999, 23). The problem here lies with the "ideological weight that local knowledges have been made to carry in this quarrel with the West" (Nanda 1999, 24). This is precisely the dichotomous divide between good and bad, local and global and the essentialisation of everything local, without a closer look of inherent sexist, racist, classist structures of discrimination and subjugation. Arguing for counter-hegemonic approach to knowledge cannot mean to sweepingly dismiss the one, and promote the other, but to 1) acknowledge that there is no one universal way of making sense of the world and to 2) carefully dissect how narratives support hegemonic frames and/or work to deconstruct and counter them. To walk the 'slippery path between imperialism and romanticism' a 'de-essentialised' version of relativism might be productive, one that does not "reject the basic tenets of epistemology, which are universal in human knowledge, but rejects the imperialism of what Western accounts" (Stewart 2021, 15) have subverted these tenets into.

5.3 Braiding knowledge systems

As has been outlined above, ways of framing knowledge that are deeply rooted in the ideals of Enlightenment are by no means the only way of seeing and understanding the world. In many parts of the world there are epistemologies and ontologies that lay focus on rather different aspects than promoted by the paradigms of progress and rationality. Nevertheless, while it is important to point to colonial divides and their legacies in devaluing some ways of knowing in favour of others, establishing a Manichaean distinction between 'local/traditional' and 'global/Western' is not central nor productive for the attempt to define counter-hegemonic conceptions of knowledges. Quite in contrast, as Nanda (1999) argues, this divide can be problematic in terms of essentialising and romanticizing the 'noble savage' (Kiely 1999) and sweepingly dismissing all knowledges from the 'West' as inherently wrong and imperial. In line with Nanda's criticism and cautioning of neo-populist co-optation, I would also somewhat disagree with Ziai's suggestion of "traditional knowledge systems *instead* of modern science" as one of

the entry points of social restructuring. If by 'modern science' the hegemony of Euro-modernity is meant, then this is applicable. However it becomes more complex when thinking about advances in health and medicine, and, to give just one example, in the treatment of deadly diseases. The differentiation between 'modern' and 'traditional' is not productive here. Rather, it should be made between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic, distinguishing between the knowledge that is employed and works to maintain the status quo of current global divides (patriarchal, racist, sexist, capitalist), most recently visible around the patenting of COVID-19 vaccines, and those knowledges, regardless of their origin and location, that not only accept that they are one of many ways to see the world, but also provide a more holistic view on the entanglements of human and non-human earth others.

Here, it seems useful to return to the metaphor of braiding, which rather than synthesising two or more strands, could be understood as a

> "practice yet-to-come located in a space in-between and at the edges of bricks and threads, aiming to calibrate each sensibility towards a generative orientation and inter-weave their strands to create something new and contextually relevant, while not erasing differences, historical and systemic violences, uncertainty, conflict, paradoxes and contradictions."

(Jimmy, Andreotti and Stein 2019, 21)

As Esteva has famously quipped, we can share a common 'no', but be open to the thousands of 'yeses'. In that sense, what counts as counter-hegemonic 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). The question is whether we want to imagine the multitude of 'yeses' as interwoven, or as existing alongside each other. In the sense of a shared humanity and inevitable entanglement, the former seems much more reasonable.

6 From monocultures and non-existences to a counter hegemony of particularities and a 'world in which many worlds fit'

The question of whether practices considered as counter-hegemonic and non-Western do indeed go beyond Western models can be broadly confirmed. The analysis of counter-hegemonic practices in the three realms has shown that practices share several common dimensions and strategizing going beyond Western models. However, their existence does not necessarily mean that the hegemonic model is overthrown or even fundamentally weakened. In line with Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) proposition of a 'chain of equivalences' and the pluriversal vision of a 'world in which many worlds fit' these various practices can be understood as part of the multitude of practices and strategies that work in solidarity to construct a counter hegemony.

Responding to the question of to what extent and in what dimensions counter-hegemonic practices have been able to livelihoods of certain groups is difficult for two reasons: Firstly, it requires judging the circumstances of livelihoods. If we assume qualitative measurements in the sense of solidarity and reciprocity then livelihoods of communities practicing counter-hegemonic strategies have certainly improved. Secondly, though, any alternative is inevitably in the larger hegemonic structure and impacted by its hybridities. Assuming that the 'world of many worlds' is the one most desirable to ensure a 'good life' for all, requires non-capitalist practices to have enough space to thrive. In this context, Ziai has argued that what is needed for PD as a counter-hegemonic practice are strategies that contribute to an upscaling of the niches, non-capitalist pockets of resistance, that are existing plentifully.[26] But what does upscaling in this regard mean? It must not mean that there is one solution that needs to be made applicable for all. Quite in contrast, because this, once again, would imply assumptions and assertions of universalism. However, it means that there needs to be enough space for the practices of alternatives to exist, grow and flourish – all in their niches, but in myriads of interconnections. In this context, Katherine Gibson has talked of "assemblages that produce actions across scale" , meaning they can be locally based, but still be operating globally. In an ecological sense, assemblages are "open-ended gatherings that "allow us to ask about communal effects without assuming them [and that] […] show us potential histories in the making"

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[26] In personal conversation.

(Lowenhaupt Tsing 2015, 23). Escobar calls these assemblages "place-based yet transnationalized strategies" (Escobar 2008, 15). Capitalism is fundamentally in opposition to these non-capitalist assemblages. Thinking of the pluriverse, capitalism is part of those worlds that refuse to relate and thereby deny others their existence because it is built on extraction and exploitation, and, inherently, on inequality. Writing from a position of privilege, it is impossible and inappropriate to differentiate between colonized minds and legitimate desires for more material resources. At the same time, there is inherent danger in proclaiming the richness of social relations and community cohesion as desirable alternative to the hegemonic model. Roelvink (2020) has argued about research on diverse economies as 'performative ontological practice'. To some extent this takes account of the inevitable subjectivity of the researcher and her positionality impacting on the research. On the other hand it implies re-setting a certain (research) agenda deemed valuable by bringing previously marginalised counter practices to the limelight. While I am sympathetic to this endeavour, the point is open to critique of externally imposing yet another agenda. This issue can be resolved twofold. First, the narrative of capitalism and 'development' is so all-consuming and all-encompassing that a counter narrative is desperately needed. Nevertheless, and that is the second point, it fundamentally depends on who is making claims where, how for what and for whom. Here a closer conversation with debates within the degrowth movement can be productive (at least, for someone from the global North, writing in the global North) since narratives about different forms of economic, cultural and traditional practices must be connected with addressing and contesting prevalent and blatant global power asymmetries and hierarchies and their root causes. Localised alternative practices will unlikely become so powerful that they can uproot this by themselves.

There is also the contentious issue of whether survival strategies, as some localised practices are termed, can be transformative. As an example, even thinking of and promoting commoning, visions are unlikely to work if people do not have any means in order to take possession of or appropriate commons. Solidarity and community organising is very often not emancipatory, in the sense that it only maintains a status quo, but does not contribute to a 'good life' in a longer term perspective because people have to struggle for their bare survival (Schöneberg 2019a, 273). If this is true, we need to talk about redistribution, reparation, tax justice etc. to provide the basis for global justice and give space to other worlds beyond the One-World. Postdevelopmental counter-

hegemonic, non-Western economic practice, or economies in the plural, require decolonisation of global governance and trade relations, and most importantly redistribution. That makes it inevitable to think PD and discourses of imperial modes of living, postgrowth and degrowth in conjuncture (again, especially as someone from the global North).

One of the main critiques towards PD proponents, Escobar among others, claiming that alternatives must come from the grassroots and be rooted in communities is an essentialisation and romanticization of the local serving as the alleged counterpoint to the destructiveness of Westernized globalization. Indeed, there is a noticeable positive bias in examples drawn upon in the PD literature (including in this paper). Mostly, only practices and strategies are highlighted that comply to a leftist-utopian imaginary of a 'good life'. As a prominent example, the 'Pluriverse – Post-Development Dictionary' (Kothari et. al. 2019), seeks to collect and showcase a variety of alternatives from all parts of the world. The many examples drawn upon share several of the common convictions that have also been teased out and highlighted in this paper: unity of human and non-human; conviviality and interdependence; prefigurative mutualism, autonomy and self-government (Garcia-Arias and Schöneberg 2021, 866). However, being non-Western or locally rooted does not automatically qualify for the 'better' life. In fact, all communities and societies, regardless of their context and location, are by no means free from power divides, oppression, discrimination and exclusion. The critical voices of von Hindte (2021), Nanda (1999, 2001) Ziai and Schaffar (2018) and Ziai (2019) are especially noteworthy in situating and grounding claims of an oftentimes rather too binary narrative of (counter-)hegemony. In her work on 'Post-Development from the Political Right?' von Hindte (2021) lucidly shows how discourses and ideology of reactionary right-wing actors and movements in the global North correspond to PD criteria as defined by Escobar (1995, 215) and are readily employed to justify racist and nationalist imaginaries. In fact, the New Right also draws on Gramsci and seeks to implement a discursive counter hegemony. Von Hindte concludes that the New Right "can be classified as neo-populist PD which aims for a program of reactionary populism" (von Hindte 2021, 64).

Nanda sheds light on how discourses of local knowledges, tradition and difference have become appropriated by local elites. She problematises how PD alternatives seem to be based on a Manichaean contrast between the "presumably imperialistic, universal and

abstract scientific knowledge of the West and the presumably benign, situated and embodied knowledges of the non-Western people" (Nanda 1999, 6). With her study of farmers' movements in India she highlights that "insistence on cultural authenticity of knowledge and technology does not always empower the poor and marginalized, and can actually help the traditional elites in maintaining their hegemony over the forces of change" (Nanda 1999, 7). Rather, there is the danger of nationalist and exclusionary celebrations of the local, that relies both on the assumption of a homogenous local, but also on the delineation from the alleged Western enemy. Unquestioned localism and praise of 'tradition' is therefore only too easily cooptable by those that have an interest in maintaining local structures of power and marginalisation.

The response to the question of whether there is possible bias in the selection and representation of possible PD and counter-hegemonic practices is therefore twofold: on the one hand, this bias can be confirmed. In this paper and other PD writings, such as the Post-Development Dictionary, likewise mainly those examples are drawn upon that seem to be working well within the frames of alternatives *to* 'development' in all its nuances. The coherence of selection seems to be confirmed through the similarity of strategies and practices in different contexts. The similarity in the alternatives discussed also shows that while PD might claim to only be declaring a common NO (and not prescribing a common YES), there is a set of shared values informing most PD thinkers. It is these shared values that make them choose certain examples and not others.[27]

On the other hand, it is obvious that claims of alternatives can become very easily co-opted into an exclusionary, populist and nationalist agenda. The critical approach to the unquestioned desirable representation of localism and different claims of traditionalism is definitely under-researched and needs to receive more attention. In any case, it has become clear that binary categorizations are in no way helpful for exploring pathways towards alternatives to the logic and impact of the Capitalocene, (neo)-extractivism and the uncritical belief in euro modernist ideologies of progress and growth. The differentiation that is productive is therefore not between Western/non-Western practices, but between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic ones, without silencing the inevitable hybridity of all life worlds.

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[27] I thank Sally Matthews for this point.

Finally, some critical remarks seem apt about promoting the idea of a different, a counter, hegemony as *a* or even *the* solution to the many shortfalls Postdevelopment proponents, amongst others, have identified in the realms of economies, politics and knowledges. Again, the central point of contestation is whether, and if so, how, it is even possible to criticize the universality of the one-world (Escobar 2020) while at the same time promoting the universality of a counter-hegemonic vision of pluriversality. The problem seems paradoxical and irresolvable and especially with view to right-wing co-optations of visions of a 'good life' one feels the urge to define normative boundaries. In this paper, and in line with what Laclau has argued, I assume the possibility of practicing a counter-hegemony to the dominant model of oppression and highlight different pockets of resistance where these practices might have space to flourish. The difference to the hegemonic model that I want to emphasize here is precisely the question of particularity and plurality. In the, what we now experience as the, hegemonic model, at one point *one* single particularity has assumed universality and dictates the conditions for all. Imagining a counter-hegemonic model of radical democracy essentially denies this possibility. In a *world in which many worlds fit* no single world can claim the universality of its particularity, but in order to continue existing must respect the particularities of all others. However, sole recognition is not enough. Despite specific contextualisation and particularity the many worlds must engage into "relations of solidarity with other groups and engaging in wider struggles at the level of society" as otherwise there is the danger that the "group will be totally enclosed in its particularized demands and its actions will have no hegemonic consequences at the wider level" (Worsham and Olson 1999, 21). The creation and perseverance of a pluriverse against co-optation therefore requires meshworks of solidarity and resistance that reach beyond the contextualised struggles. As a result, one exclusion in formulating counter-hegemony is inevitable and necessary: of those that refuse to engage in struggle of solidarity and reciprocity.

The flashlight view on different ways and forms of counter-hegemonic practices that this paper has attempted has also made clear that there are no sealed categories in terms of what can contribute to the 'good life' and what is in opposition. The examples drawn upon have shown that much resistance is happening in in-between and hybrid spaces. Possibly, that might mean that, to return to Ursula LeGuin quoted in the beginning, that the subversiveness of the utopian imagination might neither lie in an invariable

rejection of everything associated with modernity nor an unquestioned embracing of tradition, but in a pluriversal remaking of both.

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