



Alternatives to development

Miriam Lang

Rosa Luxemburg Foundation

Regional office for the andean countries, Quito, Ecuador



Conditions for transformation

In the geopolitical Global South:

- Question many hegemonic narratives regarding well-being, development, modernization, poverty etc.
- Not one pattern or template of linear progress
- Take into account diversity of cultures, modes of living and needs

Questioning the hegemonic narratives

Development:

- In LA not “development alternatives” but “alternatives to development” itself.
- Development as a new legitimation of the expansion of capitalist world relations after World War II.
- Emancipation and transformation need to overcome the illusion of development.

Questioning the hegemonic narratives

Established myths of neoclassical economy:

- Growth of GDP does not automatically provide well being and jobs.
- Exporting must not necessarily be a priority.
- Direct foreign investment does not automatically benefit the people of a country.

Questioning the hegemonic narratives

- Happiness is not necessarily related to development, modern way of life, access to increasing consumption of material goods

Happiness is about a lot of criteria, e.g. being part of a community, being loved, being healthy, working in meaningful activities, being rich in time for life, having the necessary material base according to the place where you live



Alternatives on the utopic level

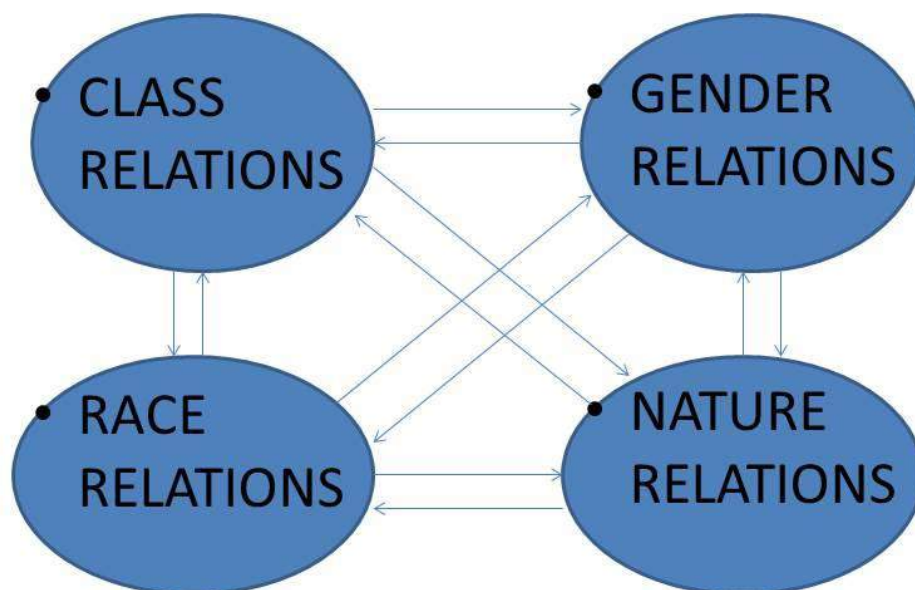
Buen vivir (living well):

- Humans are a part of Nature (biocentrism)
- Nature has its own rights
- The objective is not to live better (competitiveness) but to live well, in harmony
- Emphasis on exchange, complementarity,
- Community as base (collective and individual subjects/rights)
- Decentralization and diversity (not ONE recipe)
- Plans of living are locally constructed between all (direct democracy from below)
- Generational justice
- Reciprocity, not profit or greed, as a driving logic

Criteria for alternatives

- Limits of earth and thus of growth (dematerialize)
- Open up a post-capitalist horizon
- Demercantilize, de-commodify and commonize
- Leave room for cultural diversity, traditional ways of community life
- Democratic construction from below, not imposition from above
- Collective, communal models of property (neither State nor private)

Criteria for alternatives



Individual level

- Work less, consume less, share more
(greed line, 4-in-1 perspective)



Individual level

- Buy reparable goods, local production, not energy intensive
- Recycle
- Organize
- Generate spaces for alternative consumption which at the same time strengthen community



Local community level

- Implement short commercialization chains (peasant markets, etc.)
- Implement alternative currencies
- Strengthen small diverse ecological farming both in cities and countryside
- Reclaim public spaces for those activities



Local community level

- Implement alternative income activities (e.g. community tourism)
- Get involved in local and national public policies
- Control and take care of territories
- Discuss education as a means of de-colonization
- Elaborate plans of buen vivir for the specific territory



Local public policies

- Regulate the use of land in a sense of demercantilizing and commoning (collective and social property)
- Seek local sources of energy which can be administrated by the community
- Apply a progressive and redistributive tax system
- Limit and control the exploitation of nature



Local public policies

- Encourage community controls
- Discuss “development projects” with the community in order to analyse the real benefits
- Participatory budgeting



National public policies

- Apply a progressive and redistributive tax system
- Foreign debt audit – reduce illegal and illegitimate debt
- Review existing subventions following criteria of redistribution and sustainability
- Review public spending – cut unnecessary bureaucracy and modernistic megaprojects that do not benefit community



National public policies

- Give priority to local producers in public procurement
- Redistribute access to land, water and energy as a human right
- Limit speculation in real estate and construction – strengthen models of social and collective property
- Limit extractivism to national or regional needs, exclude it in high biodiversity zones
- Implement strict policies on ecological damage and reparation

Regional level

- Regionalize economies and markets
- Seek complementarity between nations in production, by regional planning and taking into account ecological, technological and knowledge conditions in each countries
- Protect regional production from cheap importations
- Protect regional knowledge from intellectual property appropriation
- Seek regional sovereignty (food, energy, health care and medicine, etc.)



Thank you.

