

## **Economics, Geography and Producing ‘Development’**

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All knowledge is local, and we know ‘development’ in particular, geographically specific ways. There are broad conventions about what constitutes societal development, instantiated in world maps of Gross National Income or the Human Development Index. Through such technologies we have come to know development as a sequence of Rostowian stages of capitalism, through which all societies must pass to reach *nirvana*. This is endorsed by all the major supra-national institutions, innumerable textbooks, and not a few disciplines. This stagiest, diffusionist, and quite ubiquitous knowledge about development emerged, however, from a particular spatio-temporal context (eighteenth century colonial northwestern Enlightenment Europe). It was reinvented for post-colonial times in the United States after the shift from European to US hegemony marked by Bretton Woods. Fashions, spatialities and discourses subsequently shifted, from state-led national development to market-led globalization (now perhaps giving way to global Keynesianism), but the imaginary of development as a shared path, and of today’s wealthy capitalist nation-states as the norms of what it means to be developed, persists.

In this paper, I examine how this particular knowledge of development has come to be justified by resort to mainstream Anglo-American economic theory, and whether geographical theory may force a re-examination of the grounds and viability of such knowledge. My case study is the current moment of crisis in globalization; a moment when influential economists are recognizing that globalization has been associated with increasing spatial inequality at all scales, and worry that this inequality is undermining civil society support for development-as-globalization. It is also a moment when economists and geographers are vying for the hearts and minds of economic geography. I review prominent proposals to address this crisis, grounded in Anglo-American economic theory, which seek to level the playing field for global capitalism, arguing that these proposals are plagued by a limited understanding of geography, and by a lack of attention to the complex emergent spatialities of globalization. I contrast this with an analysis of how economic geographical theory (in Geography) produces a quite distinct knowledge of development, in which: Spatio-spatial inequality is immanent to capitalism, development is multi-faceted, non-capitalist livelihoods are valued, and the very possibility of global expertise and ubiquitous best practices is questioned. In times of crisis, what counts as knowledge is up for grabs; a propitious moment for analysis, but also

intervention. Thus I conclude with reflections on the practical implications of such alternative development knowledge.