

Quotidianism of “Newness” in “Oldness”: Modernism, Poverty and Inequality in South Africa

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ABSTRACT This paper illustrates that South Africa’s democratic governance has not eradicated apartheid structural matrices of poverty and inequality. Over the past 20 years, South Africa reinvented “newness” in “oldness” through at least three neo-libertarian development trajectories. After replacing the 1994 Reconstruction and Development Programme with the 1996 Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), South Africa adopted the 2012 National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 Vision, which portrays itself as a departure from “entitlement” and “state welfarism” to “developmental paradigm”. But this self-proclaimed paradigmatic shift reflexively reinvents GEAR’s unrealistic hope of marrying orthodox modernity with social equity and redistributive justice through fast economic growth. The NDP places the burden of development on the victims of apartheid capitalism. Tacitly, it provides neoliberal matrices similar to those of GEAR macroeconomics. Also, it makes a promise that it equally undermines through continuities wherein “newness” is reflexively invoked in “oldness”, thereby rendering experiences of poverty and inequality quotidian. The paper analyzes statistical trends of poverty and inequality to demonstrate that their continuities have become quotidian amidst pronouncements of “newness” of policy.