

**Interpretations of development:  
Culture and the development encounter in rural  
KwaZulu-Natal, a case study.**

By

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## **Declaration**

I, Michael Francis, do hereby declare that this is my own work and that all other people's works have been fully acknowledged. I further declare that I have never before submitted this work for an award of a degree to any university. This work is being submitted in partial fulfillment of Master of Arts degree in the Faculty of Human Sciences at the University of Natal, South Africa.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: March 25

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All errors and omissions in this work are mine and mine alone.

## **Abstract**

My thesis examines the concept of development through a semiotic framework in a rural community in KwaZulu-Natal. I break from the purely linguistic or text-bound semiotic framework and examine the context of the signs and signifiers of development. I argue that development should be looked at as a meaning making system. This breaks from static models and allows for contestations of development to be heard. In order to do so I begin with a genealogy of the concept 'development' as a background to why the concept has such salience and to highlight some of the dominant models. My genealogy does not search for an origin of development, but looks at specific points of appearance and historical forms of dominance that still structure it. I then examine some of the signs of development as they are articulated within this community. Development may take on unusual or discrepant meanings that refute the universality of development models as they are realised within this community. The development encounter is where the different understandings of development are negotiated. This brings together the various metaphors of development as meanings are contested and ultimately played out in real life.