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## **RETHINKING RESISTANCE IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

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CLEMENS PFEFFER

## Rethinking Resistance in Development Studies

The enormous variety of different understandings, definitions and theoretical approaches in studies of resistance across different disciplines, geographical and cultural contexts is strongly reflected in the interdisciplinary field of development studies in the last two decades. The most prominent characteristic of writings on resistance and development is their shared understanding of unequal North-South relations and the colonial legacy of postcolonial development interventions. Studying resistance on a global level since the mid-1990s did not necessarily imply a critical reflection on the epistemic regimes of postcolonial development discourse, and furthermore little attention was paid to more fragile, subtle, incoherent forms in which social movements or subaltern groups contest, subvert, reformulate and reclaim the dominant development narrative. More recent studies on resistance and development have tried to overcome these shortcomings (McMichael 2010; Motta/Nilsen 2011), and have enabled a perspective, which makes visible how acts of resistance (re-)configure ‘development’.

### 1. The popularisation of ‘resistance’

As Hollander and Einwohner (2004: 533) point out, “[r]esistance is a fashionable topic”. Struggles in the Middle East, as well as its ‘Arab Spring’, anti-capitalist and anti-austerity protests in Greece and Brazil, the Gezi park protests in Turkey, rallies against rape and police violence in India, feminist activism by *Pussy Riot* and *Femen*, as well as *Euromaidan* in the Ukraine, are all subjected to an extensive medialisations. Regardless of the differences in form, political agenda, organisation and scale of these struggles, they are put under an overarching, crosscutting frame, called ‘resist-

ance'. The diverse set of topics and methods encompass nearly everything from collective forms of protest to subversive clothing and individual hairstyles, from subtle forms of disobedience in workplaces to publicly speaking out about rape experiences, from cultural maintenance to violent transformation and revolt against totalitarianism (Hollander/Einwohner 2004: 535f). Critical legal scholar and philosopher Costas Douzinas (2014) has recently called upon the Left to overcome the melancholic and pessimistic attitude towards political developments in Greece, Turkey and Ukraine in order to "explore the contemporary return of resistance" and to picture the "new age of resistance". However 'resistance' has not been asleep, either on the streets or in academic discussions. It is rather that the popularisation of the term 'resistance' and the labeling of new social movements as 'resistance movements', has called a whole new range of left-wing protagonists into play, who define themselves as 'politically involved', 'progressive' and 'radical' and are little informed of the long tradition of research in this field.

*Resistance studies:* Originally, studies on resistance in the post-World War II German language area were very much informed by historical studies on National Socialism (see Steinbach 2000) and in the Anglo-Saxon part of the post-colonial world by studies on anti-colonial resistance (see Abbink et al. 2003). In both cases, research investigations were closely connected to the construction of a new national identity, though in very different respects. A more in-depth theoretical discussion about how to define resistance was initiated when subcultural studies applied this term to discuss oppositional acts among the youth in the 1970s (see Williams 2011). Simultaneously, women's and gender studies enriched the conceptual as well as empirical discussion, leading the way for a substantial reconfiguration of resistance which considered the multi-layered, intersectional forms of oppression, through their analysis of women's counter-struggles against patriarchy (see Cosslett et al. 1996). Since the 1990s, resistance has gained a lot of attention in social movement studies (see Goodwin/Jasper 2003), black studies, subaltern and postcolonial studies (see Ashcroft et al. 1995) as well as global and transnational studies (see Amoore 2005).

The popular public and academic debates on 'resistance' over the last 50 years has considerably enriched and broadened the view on political, social,

cultural struggles against domination. The cross-disciplinary employment of 'resistance' has, however, simultaneously produced a significant weakness in relation to the use of 'resistance' as an analytical category. The limited consensus on what can be understood as 'resistance' and the indiscriminate use of the term has put resistance as a concept into question (Weitz 2001; Hollander/Einwohner 2004; Raby 2005). Tim Cresswell (2000) argues that the term 'resistance' has been so widely applied, that it is in danger of becoming meaningless and theoretically unhelpful. "Something that is applicable to everything is not a particularly useful tool in interrogating social and cultural life", and, he continues with a sarcastic undertone, "[it] is not unlikely that soon we shall have policing as resistance, conformity as resistance and perhaps domination as resistance" (Cresswell 2000: 259).

Douzinas' (2014) claim that studies and theories of 'resistance' are not close enough to political practices and therefore face the limitations of "disembodied abstraction", overlooks the problem that a lot of current studies effectively fail to differentiate between the use of 'resistance' as an 'indigenous category', that is, as a term used in politically strategic ways, and the analytic use of the term. Frederick Cooper's argument in relation to the use of concepts like 'identity', 'modernity', and 'globalisation' in studying colonialism, equally applies to the use of 'resistance'; the problem is not that 'indigenous categories' are generally applied as analytic ones, but that "the usefulness of an analytical category doesn't follow from its salience as an indigenous one: such concepts must perform analytic work, distinguishing phenomena and calling attention to important questions" (Cooper 2005: 8). However, sharpening the analytical understanding of categories like 'resistance' within academia does not immediately solve the problem of critical engagement with social movements, as, through that process of re-defining, Cooper (2005: 9) continues, "the task of understanding forms of discourse in their own contexts" is complicated.

## **2. Structuralist and poststructuralist approaches**

There is a great difficulty in defining concepts of resistance, since debates have stretched across the relevance of consciousness, intentionality, experience, culture, identity, power, domination and subjectivity (see Raby

2005). In the first phase of research up to the 1980s, resistance was primarily understood as a conscious act of opposition by subordinate groups or individuals against a dominant power. Later, under the influence of the poststructuralist turn, the boundaries between dominant and resistant actors were set less clearly, and researchers concentrated on small, fragmented, temporary, sometimes also contradictory disruptions of subordination. Rebecca Raby (2005) argues that, underlying the different conceptualisations of resistance associated with structuralist and poststructuralist strands, are particularly diverging understandings of power and subjectivity. In spite of the controversial debates about the constitutive nature of a resistant act (be this active, passive “act” or forms of appropriation) and the extent to which subjects are determined by economy, ideology, class, gender and so forth, different structuralist approaches share the notion that resistance arises from a “rational, pre-discursive, internally coherent, acting subject” (Raby 2005: 155). The desire to resist is seen as innate to humanity and/or the experience of oppression. In contrast, poststructuralists argue that subjects are always produced by historical location and discourses. Resistance is therefore either grounded in counter discourses or in gaps and contradictions that accompany the discursive – never fully complete – construction of the subject. Furthermore, poststructuralist approaches often follow a Foucauldian conception of power as not being possessed or entirely realised by one group relative to another but always relationally constituted through discourses and practices of governance (Foucault 1978, 1980). “Foucault’s conception of power is different from other views of power in that it does not rely on the notion that people are being forced directly or coercively to act against their interests. Also power in the form of a global strategy is not seen as an intentional form of oppression but as an unintended consequence of locally intentional actions” (Cresswell 2000: 262). Resistance is not located outside or opposed to power, but is rather understood as an integral and constitutive element of power relations.

This distinction of opposed epistemological and ontological positions towards subjectivity and power can be particularly useful in tracing the origins of different approaches towards ‘resistance and development’ since the 1990s. Neither has the poststructuralist approach fully or neatly replaced prior discussions of Southern struggles from a structuralist perspective (see Parpart 1993; Marchand/Parpart 1995), nor does the use of Foucauldian



approaches towards subjectivity and discourse necessarily imply the withdrawal of a rather homogenous and totalising conception of power along the North-South divide (see Escobar 1992a; Kapoor 2009; Chaudry et al. 2013). The following section illustrates the development of discussing resistance in development studies with special regard to the confrontation, exchange and synthesis of structuralist and poststructuralist approaches (see also table 1).

### **3. Resistance and postcolonial theory**

At the beginning of the 1990s, discussions on resistance in postcolonial studies attracted attention from critical development researchers. The works of Arturo Escobar (1992a, 1992b) and Jane Parpart (1993) most confidently apply the term to discuss ‘new’ social movements in the Global South and characterized these movements as most radical in their rejection of development (interventions). ‘Resistance’ is not described merely as a struggle over material conditions but also over meanings and discourses. According to Escobar (1992a), in the wake of the financial crisis in the 1980s the dominant development discourse lost control over its subjects and its cultural hegemony started being contested and rejected by social movements in the Global South. Similarly, feminist scholar Jane Parpart (1993: 456) emphasises that the ‘lost decade’ of development evoked epistemic challenges to the development paradigm and that “local knowledges” in the Global South become the most important “sites of resistance”.

Both approaches base their interpretation on a postcolonial reading of development discourse as an ethnocentric and destructive discourse that legitimises the subordination of the Global South in the post-independence era. However they represent different perspectives regarding how and by whom the development discourse is (or can be) resisted. While Escobar (1992a: 24) follows Edward Said in his rather totalising and monolithic conception of domination, and equates the knowledge production on the ‘underdeveloped countries’ (by the World Bank, United Nations, bilateral development agencies, planning offices in the Global South etc.) with the colonial knowledge production on the ‘Orient’, Parpart rejects the notion of an all-powerful construction of the ‘Other’ and frames resistance from



within a developmental power structure. She thereby picks up on important critiques that followed Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and that both relocated oppositional struggles beyond the colonial (discursive) determination (Harlow 1987; Hall 1990; Scott 1990) and presented the colonial discourse as ruptured and hybrid (Bhabha 1983; Spivak 1985). It was this turn towards a reconceptualisation of resistance in postcolonial and feminist studies that pointed out the direction for studying resistance in critical or postdevelopment studies, a direction which equally displayed itself as a 'radical' answer to prior, more technical, depoliticised approaches towards development (Pieterse 1992: 11; Kothari 2005).

Linking resistance *against* or *for* development to the postcolonial discussion on the possibilities of counter discourse and subversion, led to the argument that social movements' struggles in the Global South can be seen as continuing struggles against 'colonial modernity', struggles which were themselves preceded by anti-colonial struggles in the twentieth century. However, the historical moment of anticolonial resistance, the radical transformation of international relations in the aftermath of decolonisation, national sovereignty, and not least the changing discourse and practices under the development paradigm, were often neglected by those who prominently applied the term and praised subaltern agency as counter-hegemonic struggle. Frederick Cooper has rightly argued that the postcolonial notion of an "atemporal modern colonialism" has also limited the possibilities of studying resistance in the postcolonial era: "Within this line of argument, resistance might be celebrated or subaltern agency applauded, but the idea that struggle actually had effects on the course of globalization is lost in the timelessness of colonial modernity" (Cooper 2005: 16). From this vantage point, critical scholars have tried to reconceptualise resistance – some main approaches will be differentiated in the next section.

#### **4. 'Resistance and development': four approaches, four papers**

Since the introduction of resistance into the field of development, it has been discussed in various ways that either linked to, or dissociated from, the early postcolonial and post-development investigations. The thematic fields range from movements against land acquisitions and displacement (in

the course of development projects), resistance against neoliberal globalisation and state interventions, to gender justice, sexual rights and women’s movements, as well as educational projects for the decolonisation of knowledge. The geographical focus lies far beyond the earlier focus on Latin America, and while publications contain empirical analysis from very different geographical locations in the Global South, the most important instances in recent years being India, South Africa, the Middle East and South-East Asia (see McMichael 2010; Motta/Nilsen 2011; Chaudry et al. 2013). This special issue also takes account of this geographical spread and assembles empirical examples from Tanzania, India, Greece, as well as from the global network level (with a special focus on South-East Asia).

In the following, four main approaches towards ‘resistance and development’ are distinguished: (1) resistance as *absolute refusal*, (2) resistance as *reflexive contestation*, (3) *resistance as resilience*, and (4) resistance as *appropriation, subversion and re-envisaging*.

	progressive	not (necessarily) progressive
poststructuralist approaches	<i>appropriation, subversion and re-envisaging</i>	<i>reflective contestation</i>
structuralist approaches	<i>absolute refusal</i>	<i>resilience</i>

Table 1: Approaches towards ‘resistance and development’

Source: own elaboration

(1) Resistance as *absolute refusal*: Escobar’s writing on social movements in Latin America can be regarded as most influential in discussing ‘resistance’ in development studies since the beginning of the 1990s. With *Imagining a Post-Development Era* (1992a) he sets the agenda for a new debate on the epistemic struggles for ‘alternatives to development’, which he defines as autonomous struggles independent from the dominant development narrative. Escobar thus also sees social movements in the Global South as harbingers of a new transition towards a model of society that goes “beyond the principles of equality, relations of production and democ-

racy” (ibid 1992a: 48). Although he explicitly applies a poststructuralist understanding of discourse formation, following Foucault (1978, 1980), his outline of an all-powerful hegemony of development that can only be challenged in the wake of political transformation, sets him much closer to earlier structuralist approaches by dependency theorists (see the discussion of A.G. Frank’s work in Kapoor 2008). Not least, Escobar’s conception of resistance stands for a complete decoupling and *absolute refusal* of Western epistemology, especially in development discourse. More recently, studies that are informed by decolonial theory (Quijano 2000; Mingolo 2000), have promoted a similar approach and describe “externally-imposed alien developmentalism” as a manifestation of capitalism that is resisted by indigenist solidarity and independent knowledge production (Kapoor 2013: 20). Resistance is therefore defined in this approach as an anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, anti-development act, predominately located in the Global South and limited to subordinate groups as actors.

In his article on German development interventions in the realm of reproductive health in Tanzania, Daniel Bendix (in this issue) draws on this approach in relation to the question of whether challenges of colonial narratives and practices by German professionals can be characterized as ‘resistance’ and of how they should be positioned in relation to counter actions by Tanzanian ‘partners’. Resistance is thereby read against the background of a continuous ‘colonial power’, that sets hierarchical differences between ‘Western’ and East African birth practices and is deeply rooted in the history of (German) colonialism. The degree to which the colonial discourse is resisted serves for the author as a methodological tool to differentiate between, on the one hand, challenges that stabilise a hierarchical relation, and on the other those which can be regarded as an *absolute refusal* of colonial power.

(2) A rather divergent position is taken by authors who define resistance as *reflective contestation*, a relative and relational decoupling of resistant acts from a dominant order. Barbara Heron (2007: 143) for example, states that “resistance never comprises a total response”. In her study of Canadian development workers, she distinguishes different types of resistance; all of them are defined by a constant reflection of individuals on global injustice and its articulation in the power relation between donors and recipi-

ents. The most important aspect in this conception of *reflective contestation* is the conscious refusal of privileges by white, middle-class women, a refusal which entails a “compromising moral narrative” of development workers’ selves (ibid.: 143). While Heron (2007: 143) was not the first to study resistant practices with regard to everyday practices in development cooperation (see Crew/Harrison 1998; Baaz 2005), her conception deliberately breaks with the “common political usage” and the “all-or-nothing connotation”. Resistance is thus considered as an act that can be performed by actors who are in a relatively privileged, dominant position and from *within* the power structure. In a more recent publication by Anne-Meike Fechter and Katie Walsh (2013: 20), the changing lifestyles of European and North American ‘under-class’ expatriates in the Global South is both interpreted as a form of resistance against ‘upper-class’ expatriate identities, as well as a consequence of resistance to the hegemonic position of Westerners in the postcolonial labour market.

Authors that conceptualise resistance as a *reflective contestation* which is not limited to subaltern or marginalised groups, often do so with the aim of establishing an “ethical and dialogical relationship with the subaltern” (Kapoor 2008: xvi). Amongst others, Parpart (1993: 456) argues that the deconstruction of development as a dominating discourse and the recognition of its influence on Western development identities and practices does not imply that there is no “need for solidarity among all women”. She further states that the multilayered and intersecting forms of oppression should be resisted on a global, national and regional political level. Nicola Piper and Stefan Rother (in this issue) add to this multilevel dimension in their discussion of migrant rights movements in South East Asia on a regional and global level. They discuss two migrant networks, the International Migrant’s Alliance (IMA) and the Global Coalition on Migration (GCM) in order to differentiate between different resistance strategies in fighting the dominant migration policy paradigm. While the more radical grassroots network IMA calls for an autonomous struggle and therefore refuses coalition with NGOs, the GCM follows an ‘inside-out’ strategy (ibid.), which includes the mainstreaming of migrant issues at global forums such as the GFMD (Global Forum on Migration and Development). Despite the differences in their resistant strategies, both networks are discussed as an important challenge to a neoliberal discourse that frames migrant workers

as ‘agents of development’. Piper and Rother (ibid.) base their study on a “theory of resistance that is rooted in transformative justice that occurs in the form of institutional change pushed from below”. Their focus of analysis is, however, not limited to the local level but points at the transnational and global struggles against injustice and therefore contributes to the discussion of resistance *within* power structures.

While authors from the *reflective contestation* approach have their doubts about a monolithic and totalising framing of resistance as *absolute refusal*, others question whether movements’ struggles over meaning (Escobar 1992a, 1992b) necessarily include the rejection of developmentalism. Jan Nederveen Pieterse describes the visions and understandings of development in the Global South as highly heterogeneous and certainly not to be equated with ‘one’ mainstream development discourse. Social movements have thus also responded in very different ways and cannot be easily summarised under the label ‘anti-development’ (Pieterse 2000). “Many popular organizations are concerned with *access* to development, with inclusion and participation, while others are concerned with renegotiating development, or with devolution and decentralization” (Pieterse 1998: 363). Furthermore, Pieterse argues that challenges of mainstream developmentalism can, but do not necessarily have to, develop a vision for ‘alternatives to development’.

(3) Movements’ struggles against exploitation and dispossession are often driven by a more material concern to assure a livelihood and access to basic facilities. This critique of reading false motives into subaltern movements in the Global South leads the way to a conceptualisation of resistance as *resilience*, which also breaks with the idea that resistant struggles always necessarily embody a reflection on the macro-politics of domination (Harvey 2003). *Resilience* thus describes an immediate response to the most untoward circumstances (whether caused by natural forces or external domination), entailing an ‘extraordinary will’ to survive and a drive to cultural preservation (Scott 1985).

Maria Markantonatou (in this issue) picks up on this preserving function of resistance when she discusses social resistance movements in Greece from a Polanyian perspective. The author describes the dramatic consequences of austerity policies in the course of the 2011 ‘Memoranda’, a series of agreements between the Greek government and the ‘Troika’ (European



Central Bank, European Union and the International Monetary Fund) during the debt crisis. Cuts in the public sector, labour deregulation, mergers and closures of public organisations, processes of privatisation and a plethora of new taxes were responded to with various different forms of resistance. Those included more established forms of organised protest such as strikes, rallies and demonstrations, as well as the occupation of the public national TV broadcasting station and cooperatives' engagement with water privatisation policies. Not least, the author points to those initiatives which were characterised by a spirit of 'social protection' and 'solidarity', illustrated by reference to the disobedient resistant actions of the electricity utility unionists and the 'No Pay' movement. Through the lens of Karl Polanyi's (2001 [1944]) concept of the 'double movement', Markantonatou reads those responses to the austerity measures as forms of the 'self protection of society' against liberalisation and marketisation, and concludes that "society has no means to protect itself but resistance" (ibid.).

Escobar's focus (1992a, 1992b) on the epistemic struggle has, however, not yet lost its relevance for 'radical' research on development or, as Sara Motta and Alf Gunvald Nilsen (2011: 19) put it, "the politics of knowledge" is at the "heart" of studying resistance in the Global South. More recent studies prominently rephrase and adapt this thesis to what they call the new phase of political transition from state-led capitalist development to neoliberalism (McMichael 2010; Motta/Nilsen 2011). In line with Escobar, resistance is predominately conceptualised as organised and collective struggle, located in the contradictions and fault lines of developmentalism that become visible in the situation of political transition, and which is by definition oriented towards progressive political ends. Philip McMichael (2010: xiv), editor of the book *Contesting development: Critical struggles for social change* has articulated that vision explicitly as follows: "[T]ese struggles [over the dominant development narrative and for social justice] contribute to the emerging sensibility that another world is possible". It is impossible not to read this vision as a rhetorical recall of Escobar's vision of a 'post-development era'.

(4) However, the 'second generation' of postdevelopment and post-colonial approaches on 'resistance and development' has also distanced itself from the monolithic and totalising conception of an *absolute refusal*. Authors have reconceptualised resistance as the *appropriation, subversion and re-envisioning* of certain idioms in the postcolonial development

discourse. Appropriation is, amongst other things, discussed with respect to movements' engagement with 'universal principles' such as citizenship, education, elections, property and so on. Through the process of reclaiming, subaltern groups point out the exclusionary reality of these principles and therefore cause an "epistemic crisis of universalism" (McMichael 2010: 8). According to Sara Motta (2011), however, in this process of reclaiming, the moral economy and subjectivities of developmentalism are transformed, and practices, imageries and utopias move beyond the conventional frame. Research has to find new ways of theorising and conceptualising social movements in the Global South and needs more critical engagement with the epistemic privilege that limits academic perspectives on the *subversive* and *re-envisioning* forms of resistance.

Tiina Seppälä's study (in this issue) on women's resistance movements against displacement and land grabbing in India responds to this debate on how to study social movements from a privileged researcher's position, and discusses forms of co-optation by (Western) academics. Drawing from her interviews with activists, peasants, fishermen and villagers who were involved in local anti-land acquisition and anti-eviction movements in the city of Kolkata, she argues that Western political theory and transnational social movement research need some critical evaluation with respect to Eurocentric frameworks, career ambitions and socio-economic privileges. Foucault's notion of 'counter-conduct' serves as a theoretical basis for her analysis of resistance as opposition to, and transforming of power relations in, the biopolitical governance of neoliberal development. "Counter-conduct does not aim at influencing policies or political institutions – it questions normality, produces and embodies difference, constructs utopias, and creates and experiments with new subjectivities" (ibid.). These concepts are held up to the concerns of South Asian academics and feminists, who criticised the theoreticism, elitism and Eurocentrism in Foucault's work.



## 5. Concluding remarks

*“[T]he temptation to uncritically celebrate resistance [...] must itself be resisted, and some sort of critical appraisal is needed” (Kiely 2000: 1060).*

The popularisation of ‘resistance’ has led to an over-extensive application and unreflective, indiscriminate use of the term. ‘Resistance’ functions as a powerful image for a researcher’s self-positioning as ‘radical’ and ‘progressive’, but has not been evaluated enough for its analytical value. This special issue therefore tries to unfold different theoretical understandings of resistance that have led empirical research on resistance *against, for* and *within* development since the 1990s. Four major approaches, which I consider as most influential in the last twenty years of debate, are responded to adapted and reconsidered in the following articles. The theoretical frameworks range from postcolonial critique and Polanyi’s concept of the ‘double movement’ to a Foucauldian notion of ‘biopolitical governance’. Due to the explicit specification of theoretical understandings, which often remain implicit and empirically vague, authors encourage and facilitate further dialogue and exchange on the possibilities, challenges and limits of applying the highly popularised term ‘resistance’ in development studies.

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**DANIEL BENDIX**

**Resistance or Damp Squibs? Challenges to Colonial Power in Contemporary German Development Interventions in the Area of Reproductive Health in Tanzania**

**I. Introduction**

As part of Germany's contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, German 'development cooperation' is active in improving reproductive health in Tanzania. German interest in the realm of reproductive health in East Africa was sparked more than one hundred years ago during German colonial occupation and originated in concerns of a "population decline". In the context of the growing significance of East Africans as a labour force, as well as due to philanthropic and proselytising considerations, German actors came to take an interest in questions of population and reproduction (Colwell 2001; Bruchhausen 2003). After the demise of German colonial occupation, the British colonisers continued to be concerned with 'underpopulation' and felt it to be important to "[e]liminat[e] the cultural superstitions and practices surrounding childbirth" (Allen 2002: 21). A relatively unique African socialist political agenda was set up after independence (Askew 2006), and the Tanzanian government rejected the international population control agenda for two decades (Richey 2008). The 1980s witnessed a gradual acceptance of dominant international health and population policy as a result of pressure by UNFPA, World Bank, and USAID (ibid.). Especially since the mid-1980s, in the light of Structural Adjustment Programmes, state health service spending has been considerably reduced and private clinics, NGOs and development projects have proliferated and replaced many functions formerly provided by the state (Lugalla 1995; Chachage/Mbilinyi 2003). Today, the Tanzanian health sector is heavily dependent on donor money:

for the fiscal year 2011/12, 41% of the health budget was provided by ‘donors’ (Policy Forum 2012).

Former colonised territories such as Tanzania and Namibia took centre stage in the activities of German bilateral, faith-based and secular development cooperation<sup>1</sup>, particularly regarding issues of health, population and reproduction. Today, “reproductive health and population dynamics” are a focus of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development’s activities (BMZ 2011), and German development cooperation in Tanzania continues to be concerned with these issues (TGPSH 2009; DSW 2008). A comparison of German interventions in the colonial period and today evidences that colonial power continues to shape present-day ideas and practices of German development cooperation in the field of reproductive health (Bendix 2012). For instance, during colonisation, German practitioners promoted the medicalisation of birthing by introducing Western-style hospitals, training staff, and changing practices such as those involving birth positions. Nowadays, German development cooperation engages in reforms within the arena of biomedical birthing and development professionals scrutinise and attempt to reform the way obstetric care is carried out in Tanzanian hospitals. From the time of colonial rule up to today, German agents have established hierarchical differences between ‘Western’ and East African birthing practices, and East African obstetric care is construed to be deficient with regard to knowledge, planning capacities, and attitudes.

Building on findings from postcolonial Development Studies that “provide critical responses to the historical effects of colonialism and the persistence of colonial forms of power and knowledge” (Kothari 2011: 69; cf. Biccum 2005; Noxolo 2006; Slater/Bell 2002; Heron 2007; Eriksson Baaz 2005), my theoretical frame needs some further clarification. ‘Colonial power’ is understood as an analytical concept for examining power that emerged during colonial times, but which transcended the historical period of formal territorial occupation and remains operative in the present (Mbembe 2001; Mignolo 2000; Quijano 2000). Colonial power takes effect in the present through the persistence of colonial discourses and their relation to institutions, material conditions, and actors (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010; Ha 2003). I draw on a conceptualisation of power that takes into account discourses and how they are embedded in the material world, and



which is sensitive to the agency of actors. In order to distinguish power from societal relations and conditions, it is useful to understand those constellations as forms of power which have developed in an asymmetrical manner for a considerable amount of time (cf. Brigg 2002). Foucault (1989a) describes such development of societal conditions as resulting from the intensification of relations of force and discourses, and introduces the concept of *dispositif* to understand the interactions between discourses and non-discursive phenomena (Foucault 1980, 1989a; Parr 2008). Several development scholars have found this conceptualisation of power pertinent to analysing international development, since discourses and materialities form strategic constellations in order to address particular development issues (Brigg 2002; Escobar 1994; Ziai 2007). Discourses are time- and place-specific knowledge configurations which structure how issues are perceived and implemented (Foucault 1981, 1991). They are manifested materially in practices, institutions, and political-economic conditions (Foucault 1989b) which, in turn, allow certain discourses to become prominent and particular interests to be served. Discourses and materialities take effect in the world through actors who speak and act. While actors are positioned by enduring discourses and social relations (Isaac 1992), they also have room to manoeuvre, and their agency has stabilising or transformative effects on discourses and materialities (Scott 1990).

Studies of power in development (Crush 1995a; Escobar 1994; Ferguson 1994; Ziai 2004) have been accused of neglecting the role of development professionals in questioning and transforming dominant discourses (Lie 2007; McKinnon 2008). Recently, an increasing number of contributions to the debate on power and development have focused on the role of development professionals' agency (Eriksson Baaz 2005; Brigg 2009; Heron 2007; Kothari 2005; Lie 2007; McKinnon 2008). Such a focus on agents allows for "complement[ing] and critiqu[ing]" official versions of development intervention and pointing out challenges to dominant ideas (Kothari 2006: 133). Maria Eriksson Baaz (2005), for instance, highlights questioning attitudes and criticisms of development cooperation in Scandinavian professionals' accounts of their work in Tanzania. While studies on resistance commonly deal with actions of the dominated and oppressed (Hollander/Einwohner 2004; Selk 2013), this essay focuses on a group in relatively dominant positions, namely German development professionals.



It examines professionals' accounts of their work which question and modify dominant development policy and practice in order to examine whether such challenges constitute forms of resistance to colonial power.

In order to elucidate contradictory discourses, the present essay draws on James Scott's (1990) concept of "transcript". Even though Scott was interested in the "weapons of the weak" as responses to domination, his differentiation between "public transcripts" and "hidden transcripts" also seems pertinent for analysing possible resistance by development experts. In contrast to dominant narratives and practices of interventions – the "public transcripts"<sup>2</sup> – challenges can usefully be described as "hidden transcripts". According to Scott, the hidden transcript "contains [...] gestures, speech, practices [...] which are] excluded from the public transcript by the ideological limits within which domination is cast" (1990: 28). They are not directed at the public but rather at peers and people in similar socio-political and professional positions. Public and hidden accounts may be different from each other, but they are intimately related as "the practice of domination [...] creates the hidden transcript" (Scott 1990: 27). This essay focuses on the effect of hidden transcripts on the persistence of colonial power. Hidden transcripts may challenge colonial narratives and practices, but do not necessarily imply resistance to colonial power. While doubts and criticism by German professionals as well as Tanzanian opposition to German interventions harbour the potential to disrupt colonial power, they may also leave such power undisturbed or even reinforce it if they do not significantly alter colonial discourses or question the political-economic inequalities in which discourses are embedded. It is thus crucial to identify how German professionals come to terms with their doubts, how and where criticism of development cooperation is voiced, which actions flow from doubts and critique, and how resistance by Tanzanian partners is dealt with in German development cooperation. Although this essay suggests that contemporary German development intervention may often be criticised, inhabited by doubt and uncertainty, and marked by objection, I argue that colonial power is thereby not automatically absent or effaced.

I was able to gather material which evidenced 'hidden transcripts' in interviews<sup>3</sup> in which my respondents seemed to feel comfortable enough to share doubts and uncertainty regarding their work. Informal settings such as discussions in development professionals' private homes, while

sitting around the dinner table and talking over drinks, proved conducive to expressions of doubt, criticism, and opinions challenging the ‘public transcripts’ of development cooperation. What is more, my positionality in the field as a white German with personal experience in German development cooperation<sup>4</sup> often created instant commonality between myself and interviewees and thus helped me gain access to German development professionals’ ideas and opinions which questioned or ran counter to the “public transcript” of German development cooperation. This essay sets out to elicit the effects of contemporary challenges in German development cooperation on the articulation of colonial power and – referring to Jocelyn Hollander and Rachel Einwohner’s (2004) typology of resistance – discusses how far these can usefully be described as resistance. I heuristically conceptualise resistance as those ‘hidden transcripts’ which intentionally and effectively disrupt colonial power.

The first section of this essay is devoted to an examination of German professionals’ doubts regarding accepted practices and assumed truths. The second deals with their explicit criticism of development cooperation. Yet, development policy and practice are not only questioned by donor agents but are also challenged by so-called beneficiaries (Rottenburg 2009). German professionals’ accounts yielded ample evidence of Tanzanian agents’ challenges to development intervention. In the third section, I examine German narratives for signs of Tanzanian partners’ objection, negotiation, and subversion. Such accounts are complemented by statements from Tanzanian counterparts regarding their work relationship with German development professionals.

## **2. Doubts and uncertainty regarding the value of development work**

German health professionals evaluate the quality of obstetric care in Tanzania with reference to Tanzanian professionals’ planning and management capacities. For example, some interviewees suggested that Tanzanian health professionals did not know how to use the partograph, a tool for monitoring progress of delivery. If filled out correctly, the partograph allows nurses or doctors to determine at what stage a medical intervention

such as a Caesarean section is called for. This procedure is widely regarded as a *sine qua non* in biomedical obstetric care. Many of the German health workers with whom I spoke reported that Tanzanian nurses commonly did not fill it in at all or did so incorrectly, or that nurses did not take the appropriate actions on the basis of a filled-in partograph (Interview 08, 29, 37, 39). Referring to their own attempts at teaching the use of partographs, a number of German development workers express doubts and uncertainty regarding the value of their work in improving health care in Tanzanian hospitals. One interview is examined in detail in this section.

My German interview partner, a development professional working in a Tanzanian hospital training centre, found young nurses' abilities to use the partograph to be deficient and related this to their alleged inability to think systematically (Interview 29). While generally blaming Tanzanians for what she saw as poor health care, this interviewee expressed doubts regarding the value of her work in training Tanzanian nursing students: "I often ask myself in any case ... not only with the partograph ... why Africa, yes, in quotation marks, or Africans, ... Tanzanians in this case perhaps ... don't try to adapt biomedicine themselves, and include it in their system. Who or what forces them ... apart from the fact that they might find the uniforms stylish ... to adopt our system? Completely? Might there be another form then, yes, or might there be another form of teaching? I also always ask myself that. So, is this us standing in front of them and telling them something, is that even the right form? Wouldn't they have to learn completely differently?" (Interview 29).<sup>5</sup>

The interviewee noticed that her teaching had little effect on nurses' performance in clinical situations in which they had to apply the knowledge acquired in class. Furthermore, she mentioned that trained nurses generally did not use the partograph and did not understand how to use it correctly. As evident in the quote, this leads her to question whether Western biomedicine<sup>6</sup> was the right health care model for Tanzania and whether the corresponding way of teaching biomedical health care was appropriate in the Tanzanian context. The explanation for problems in health care put forward in this interview differs significantly from the dominant transcript: German development professionals commonly placed the blame on the attitudes and intellectual capacities of Tanzanian health workers (Interview 28, 30, 32, 35, 37, 43, 53, 54). The manner in which this development

worker made sense of her experience displays her awareness that knowledge systems may differ. According to her, this could imply that different manners of acquiring knowledge and teaching are necessary. Her statement takes the form of an inner monologue (“I often ask myself”, “I also always ask myself”). Remarkably, she does not mention conversations with her Tanzanian colleagues in which her questions could be answered. At least in this quote, it appears that she does not regard as potential interlocutors the Tanzanian health workers whose conduct seems so mysterious to her. Having expressed her doubts about completely adapting the biomedical health model and about her own contribution, through teaching the use of the partograph, she continues her reflections: “And I mean, indeed ... you could also ask yourself: Why is it so bad? Then you just don’t fill in this thing, and you just let yourself be surprised with each birth. And then you just say: ‘Oh well, now the child is coming; oh, now the child is not doing well’; or: ‘Oh, now the woman is bleeding’. And then you start reeling off an emergency procedure. And if you’re good, you have it in your head quickly. And if you’re not so good, then you just don’t act as quickly. And in both cases a woman can bleed to death” (Interview 29).

She entertains the idea that one could also dispense with employing the partograph. This would mean that one just lets deliveries happen and only intervenes when things go awry. However, the manner in which she verbally places herself in the position of the nurse who lets herself be surprised by deliveries (“oh well”, “oh”) shows that she views such a stance to be passive and indifferent to matters of life and death. She evidently considers it to be irresponsible because it would mean poor quality obstetric care. What begins as openness to re-imagining midwifery<sup>7</sup> and corresponding instruction ends up as criticism and cynicism. Her statement may be read as a reaction to her frustration with the ineffectiveness and futility of her instruction of Tanzanian nurse students. She continues her deliberations by voicing what she considers to be necessary for them to understand: “I mean, I ... ehm well, there is this term postpartum haemorrhage [loss of a life-threatening amount of blood following delivery, author’s note] ... ehm. I mean, it is one of the main causes of death here<sup>8</sup>, and I see that in our delivery room, and then I try to teach my students that there are risk factors: this and this and this and this and this and this are risk factors. They can recite all this mechanically in tests. But in the clinic I don’t see

that they have it in their head. [...] And it's the same with midwives. Well, not with all of them, I can really not speak for all of them, because there are, there are really fantastic colleagues, really, who think, act and plan exactly as I am used to ... from back home" (Interview 29).

In this quote, the German nurse again explains what she sees as wrong with Tanzanian midwifery, namely the widespread inability to transfer knowledge from theory to practice. Yet, she mentions that not all Tanzanian nurses are like this, but rather that some plan and work like German nurses. This contradicts her initial reflection: that the problems might have to do with the inappropriateness of biomedical health care and instruction. In this quote, she places the blame for lack of skills and knowledge on the nurses whom she could not teach to work well. Later on in the interview, she also mentioned that schooling in Tanzania did not encourage logical, independent thinking, which means that nursing students arrive poorly prepared for their training. This argument places responsibility on the Tanzanian educational system and diverts attention away from the German professional's role in the ineffectiveness of her instruction. She and her knowledge and skills no longer appear to be quite so inadequate for the task of improving obstetric health care in Tanzania. By identifying the problem as located in Tanzanian nurses' capacity to think logically and in Tanzanian schooling rather than in her expertise, she justifies her continued involvement in development cooperation (cf. Crewe/Harrison 1998: 30ff). It becomes evident that she cannot really imagine quality obstetric health care or instruction which is different from, but not inferior to, the dominant biomedical model. Notwithstanding considerable uncertainty regarding the value of her work, the interviewee maintains the colonial-era dichotomy between the portrayal of the global North as rational, technological, and progressive and the global South as being irrational and passive (cf. Mbembe 2001).

The Tanzanian health workers' supposed inexplicable immunity to profoundly reform unsettles German development professionals' assumption that they have the power to effect change, are welcome and needed, and are in control of their students' minds and actions. Despite their doubts about the effectiveness of their work, German 'developers' did not seriously question their superior knowledge and skills, the superiority of Western medicine and health care, and the subsequent need for continuing with



development intervention. In her study on former Canadian aid workers, Heron (2007) points out that the work of development professionals is “contingent on positioning the Southern Other as *available* to be changed, saved, improved, and so on, by us, thereby ensuring our entitlement to do so” (2007: 44, emphasis in original). However, at the same time colonial discourse tends to operate on the thesis that “African culture is not susceptible to change” (Heron 2007: 45). Thus, when intervention fails, Tanzanian society (whether in the form of its educational system or with reference to the ‘nature’ of Tanzanians) can be held accountable for the failure to impose change. While frustration due to the perceived futility of their work and the uncertainty caused by this challenges the image of development professionals as having ‘enterprise’ and being able to mould the world to their desires (cf. Dyer 1997), it ultimately does not destabilise colonial discourse regarding the superiority of Western health care. Doubts and uncertainty constitute “[verbal] action and opposition” which Hollander and Einwohner (2004: 538f) consider to be “core elements” of resistance. According to these authors (Hollander/Einwohner 2004: 545), such acts can even be thought of as expressions of “covert resistance”, since they are “intentional yet go unnoticed [...] by their targets” (the German development institutions they work for). However, they remain superficial, come to a halt half way along the line (thus not disrupting colonial power), and can therefore not be considered as constituting resistance.

### **3. Criticism of German development cooperation**

This section explores German professionals’ explicit criticism of Germany’s imposition of development policy and practice on Tanzania and questions the effect of such challenges. The German government explicitly follows the aid principles of partnership, participation, and ownership; according to BMZ (2012) “[p]artnership-based cooperation among all stakeholders is the single most important principle for the successful design of German development policy” and the rules of “participation and ownership” are seen as essential for satisfying the principle of partnership. My interview partners regularly affirmed that these principles guide Germany’s practical work in the field of reproductive health and population

in Tanzania. For example, a DED manager in Tanzania underlined that DED did not just impose development interventions, but that TGPSH, DED, the Tanzanian Ministry of Health, and Tanzanian Regional or District Medical Officers<sup>9</sup> engaged in negotiations and reached mutual agreements (Interview 27). However, in some interviews German development cooperation was criticised for imposing Germany's wishes on Tanzanians. When a German hospital adviser deployed in a Tanzanian regional hospital complained of lack of cooperation by his Tanzanian counterparts (see the next section for a detailed discussion of this issue), I asked him who had wanted him to come to Tanzania. He replied: "Well, the German government!" (Interview 38) The development professional saw his post as not being based on any mutual agreement between the Tanzanian hospital management and government on the one hand and Germany on the other.

Other respondents also held that TGPSH commonly decided on the strategies which Tanzanian-German development cooperation in health care was supposed to embark upon: "But in fact, who pays for the music normally also decides how it's done. And this is, of course, also the case in the Tanzanian German Programme to Support Health. That those at the top ... that most probably the Germans are the ones to say: 'That's now what's preying on our mind. That won't be the Tanzanians'" (Interview 37).

This statement explains the German imposition of development intervention with reference to an unequal relationship between Germany and Tanzania, in which Germany provides the funds and Tanzania assumes the role of recipient. Even a former senior manager of the German health programme in Tanzania was critical of what he described as Germany's imposition of its ideas on Tanzanians in the context of political-economic inequalities (Interview 10). He believed that development assistance was hindered by German insensitivity towards the Tanzanian partners. In the following quote he speaks of the problems caused by the latest GTZ management tool, Capacity WORKS<sup>10</sup>: "Well, this Capacity WORKS really takes the biscuit. [...] To now go to Tanzania, yes, and tell these poor lads there (I laugh), 'Here is our new, wonderful tool, GTZ, yes. Hey, you all, you have to learn this now!' They will think, 'They must be off their nut, these Germans'" (Interview 10). Training in Capacity WORKS, described by the interviewee as a "raving polyp" due to its complexity and incomprehensibility, became a prerequisite for any consultant to get a job with GTZ



(now GIZ), and Germany's partners in the global South had to adapt to it as well. The interviewee saw an enormous difference in negotiating power between Germany and Tanzania, which meant that Tanzanians simply had to acquiesce to German proposals.

When I asked him whether there was any room for putting into practice the touted principles of mutuality and joint formulation of policies, his answer was unequivocal. According to this account, dependence on foreign aid does not allow Tanzanians to voice criticism or negotiate the terms of cooperation. The development professional quoted above presents development cooperation as not demand-driven but donor-driven. Later on in the interview, the former senior staff member of TGPSH continued his criticism of German development cooperation. He expressed his disillusionment by pointing to the lack of sensitivity of the current, young generation of German development professionals: "They have little experience with [...] how to teach things to peoples, people in all these countries, without it being imposed from outside, but rather so that it grows inside them etc. That has been our main topic for years. How does one do good development cooperation by holding back, keeping out, and nonetheless bringing in one's influence, [...]?" (Interview 10). While direct imposition seems a no-go for him, this quote indicates that he ultimately believes in German development cooperation with Tanzania. He sees it as necessary to bring in one's own influence. What he is concerned about is the way it is done, which he regards as lacking strategy and empathy.

As this section has shown, German development professionals at times criticise their country's development cooperation for imposing interventions and German wishes on Tanzania. Yet, criticism tends not to be directed towards the idea of development cooperation as such. It is rather concerned with the way it is administered by the donors: Germany is criticised for abusing its position of power, and development principles of partnership and mutual equality are unmasked as mere wishful thinking. Such criticism echoes postcolonial analyses which cast doubt on the possibility of such 'noble' principles in the context of colonial discourses of Western superiority and political-economic inequalities (Eriksson Baaz 2005; Noxolo 2006; Cooke/Kothari 2001). At the same time, the colonial-era discourse that suggests that societies 'develop' in a linear and teleological manner, and that Germany constitutes the epitome of 'development' and thus has

the duty to engage in development cooperation, is not radically questioned (cf. Dussel 1995). Unequal power relations between Germany and Tanzania are also not criticised as unjust or connected to global inequalities and colonial histories. Thus, the ‘public transcript’ of partnership, ownership, and participation in German development cooperation with Tanzania is challenged by some informal, private accounts of development professionals, but the inherent asymmetry of development cooperation relations continues to be taken for granted. Interestingly, while the quoted interviewees criticised German development cooperation in Tanzania as insensitive, they did not extend this to their own roles as German development experts. They rather portrayed themselves as doing things differently (Interview 37) or as just being “a small cog that doesn’t have much to say” (Interview 38). This is reminiscent of Edward Said’s charge of the “horribly predictable disclaimer that ‘we’ are exceptional, not imperial” (1994: xxvi). While the examined criticism of course constitutes “action and opposition” (Hollander/Einwohner 2004: 538f), nevertheless, just like doubts and uncertainty, it also stops short of disrupting colonial power and can thus not be considered to constitute resistance.

#### **4. Challenges by Tanzanian ‘partners’**

*“But those defined in development discourse as the subjects of development are also active agents who contest, resist and divert the will of the developer in greater or lesser ways” (Crush 1995b: 20).*

In addition to doubting their own value and criticising German development cooperation, some German development professionals reported that Tanzanian partners obstructed their work. Such accounts ranged from descriptions of being deployed differently than expected and being sidelined within hospital structures, to having the feeling that Tanzanian colleagues did not want German development professionals present. These aspects point to challenge and resistance by Tanzanian counterparts to development cooperation. In this section, allusions to such agency of Tanzanians in development are analysed in order to consider their effect on the articulation of colonial power.

Several German physicians working in Tanzanian hospitals suspected that hospital management did not want them to do what had been decided on in written work agreements. Rather, heads of hospitals supposedly took advantage of their presence and used German professionals as (cheap) replacements for clinical posts: “We are just supposed to work in the hospital and serve as replacements, yet this is not part of our job description” (Interview 40). Most German interviewees complained that they did a lot more clinical work than stipulated in their contracts. Clinical work was often only one of several tasks mentioned in the agreements, in addition to advising the management, doing outreach, and training colleagues. Whereas several German development workers thought they were being used as replacements for Tanzanian doctors, one DED doctor who had worked in a Tanzanian district hospital mentioned that he suspected his recruitment to have been a result of political considerations by the hospital management (Interview 08). Allegedly, having a ‘white’ doctor made it more likely for the hospital to be upgraded in the national hospital hierarchy.

Some German professionals voiced the impression that they were being used by Tanzanian hospital management. Many also had the feeling of being sidelined within hospital structures and excluded from information and decision-making. This was reported by physicians as well as by German professionals who were exclusively deployed to assist in management tasks. It emerged from the interviews that they hardly ever gained access to the hospital management level, even though DED and CIM physicians (and of course management advisers) were supposed to spend a significant share of their working hours on improving management capacities in hospitals. According to them, they were not notified of meetings, informed too late, or not provided with relevant information. Even though they were officially part of the hospital management team, they were not let in on day-to-day management issues, and were circumvented in the case of delicate issues or far-reaching decisions. German professionals reported feeling ignored and suggested that hospital leaders were not interested in changing practices in management (Interview 38, 43, 53). Supposedly, Tanzanians prevented development professionals from being involved in management tasks in order to pursue their private agendas in an unhampered manner (Interview 53). It was suggested that Tanzanian management staff might fear that German aid workers would denigrate and discredit their Tanzanian counterparts vis-

à-vis TGPSH or other donors (Interview 38). Germans' general perception of their superior management, planning, and problem-solving capacities was thus coupled with a feeling of powerlessness given that they were not admitted to the spaces in which they could demonstrate and employ these capacities. Whereas official versions of German development cooperation in Tanzanian health care presented such cooperation as guided by partnership and mutual agreements, the private testimonies of German development workers alleged that they were used in ways contrary to agreements and generally obstructed in their work. They primarily explained this with reference to Tanzanian hospital managements' efforts to further their private agendas and an unwillingness to fundamentally change the situation.

A Tanzanian who used to work as a hospital manager put forward explanations for why Tanzanian hospital managers acted contrary to German professionals' expectations. His view sheds a slightly different light on the matter. He said that many foreign professionals were arrogant and would almost instantly begin by telling Tanzanian colleagues what was not working, what they did wrong, and what they should change; apparently, this meant that the working relationship was destroyed immediately and for good (Interview 52). If Germans came across as arrogant development experts, their Tanzanian colleagues would not tell them straightaway but would let them feel their disapproval; they would not work with them, not assist them, and not invite them to meetings. The Tanzanian professional suggested that it needed to be explained to 'development workers' prior to their deployment that they were neither going to the 'jungle' nor to work with people that did not know anything. 'Development workers' should rather learn to support existing structures and habits of working: "You cannot turn our health system into a German health system; you cannot change our management system and want a completely new one" (Interview 52). According to him, many "technical advisers" were not sensitive and "need to be cultured first and to learn", which would take a long time.

Another Tanzanian hospital manager mentioned that he was aware that TGPSH did not like "filling gaps", but that he and his team needed German development professionals for the purpose of placing them in clinical posts which needed filling (Interview 41). Rather than letting them do outreach work in health facilities across the region, and letting them stay away from the regional hospital, he wanted to make use of German development

workers for specialised clinical work in the regional hospital. He was happy with their expertise and said he assigned Tanzanian doctors to work alongside them so that they could learn from the Germans and take over one day. Both Tanzanian professionals' accounts suggest that German health practitioners were respected for their technical knowledge and that their assistance was desired, but that cooperation was difficult because German health workers either wanted to do tasks which the Tanzanian hospital management did not consider a priority, or came across as insensitive, arrogant, and even racist. While more sensitive and humble development professionals might thus be more acceptable to Tanzanian partners, the above-mentioned Tanzanian hospital manager made it clear that these were also not necessarily exempted from being sidelined by Tanzanian hospital staff: "If we had an agenda we don't want to go out, I preferred not to invite [...]. You want to contain sensitive information. This foreigner might speak to development partners and government, he has other allegiances; if we spoke about sensitive issues like embezzlement of funds, or even embezzlement of donor funds, we didn't want them to know about it" (Interview 52). Here, it is suggested that assumptions of divergent loyalties led to sidelining German professionals. While development professionals are officially portrayed as an integral part of the hospital structures in which they are deployed, their Tanzanian counterparts seem to place greater importance on where their salary comes from and to whom they are ultimately accountable.

Judging by the German practitioners' accounts discussed in the last section, Tanzanians have limited influence with regard to negotiation and initiation of development interventions; in contrast, this section has highlighted Tanzanian partners' ability to contest and subvert the manner in which German professionals go about their practical work in hospital settings. Here, Tanzanian partners seem to have significant leverage with which to follow their own agendas. German as well as Tanzanian accounts of working relations in hospitals hint at fissures in the donor-recipient hierarchy. The impression of being obstructed and sidelined in hospitals evidently unsettled German professionals' assumption that they were wanted and needed. In addition, the impression of not being involved in what they came to do seemingly disrupted their expectations of inducing change and their perception of themselves as enterprising experts (cf. Dyer 1997). Tanzanian opposition is explained by German professionals with



reference to Tanzanian agents' unwillingness to improve hospital management, as well as their pursuit of personal interests. Some interviews with Tanzanian hospital managers confirm that they had agendas which diverged from those expected of them by the German donors. Moreover, they hold German attitudes of superiority accountable for problems in cooperation. In German as well as Tanzanian accounts, we find evidence of Tanzanians following their own agendas within the limited space circumscribed by the aid context. Assumptions of Germans as being 'developers' and Tanzanians as grateful 'recipients' are unsettled as German health workers at times find themselves at the behest of their Tanzanian counterparts. Tanzanian challenges can be classified as "overt resistance" since they are intentional, "readily recognized by both targets and observers [the researcher, author's note] as resistance" (Hollander/Einwohner 2004: 545), and actually disrupt colonial power.

## **5. Challenges as damp squibs**

By concentrating on 'hidden transcripts' in the form of German professionals' accounts of their practical work in German development cooperation, this essay highlighted that present-day German intervention in reproductive health and population in Tanzania is pervaded by challenges on various levels. It was shown that current German development cooperation in Tanzania is marked by professionals' doubts regarding the value of their work, by criticism of German aid practices, and also by Tanzanian opposition. However, while challenges to hegemonic ideas and practices of development cooperation are evidently present, these did not necessarily constitute resistance to colonial power. Even though doubts and uncertainty regarding their work are evidence of an unsettling of German professionals' self-conceptions as change-inducers, most of the German accounts I examined tend to ultimately blame Tanzanians for failures. Moreover, they did not evidence doubts concerning the need for intervention as such or of the superiority of Western medical knowledge and skills. Criticism of German development cooperation was forthcoming but it hardly ever touched on the need for Germans to contribute to the 'development' of Tanzania and its health care system. This is reminiscent of James Ferguson's (1994) argument

that development discourse serves to construct the ‘recipients’ as objects of intervention while not touching on macro-structural, political issues such as the division of the world into ‘developers’ and ‘those to be developed’. The ‘public transcript’ in which it is assumed that Germany provides necessary assistance to ‘underdeveloped’ Tanzanian midwifery and health care thus remains intact. Criticism did not unsettle development cooperation’s colonial tendency to “reproduce endlessly the separation between reformers and those to be reformed by keeping alive the premise of the Third World as different and inferior, as having a limited humanity in relation to the accomplished European” (Escobar 1994: 54f). Uncertainty and criticism cannot *per se* be considered resistance but may turn out to be damp squibs: they harbour the potential for resisting colonial power but, as is evident from the interviews examined here, the way they were dealt with ultimately left existing colonial discourses untouched. This suggests that the hidden transcripts examined here tended to “strengthen and stabilise the existing system of domination” (Bliesemann de Guevara/Kühn 2012: 22). Colonial power did not seem to be fundamentally challenged by the doubts and criticism of German professionals. Opposition to development interventions by Tanzanians appears to be providing more significant potential for resisting established power relations. German and Tanzanian accounts of work relations in hospitals are evidence of a destabilisation of hierarchies between donors and recipients in which Tanzanian hospital managers seem to pursue their own agendas against the will of donors. This paper provides evidence that challenges to development interventions may disturb colonial power, but that this tends not to imply significant resistance, since colonial power takes effect despite, in the face of, and through, opposition.

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- 1 'Development cooperation' here is understood as deliberate, institutionalised interventions by bilateral agencies and NGOs of the global North in the global South, aimed at societal improvement (cf. Cowen/Shenton 1996).
- 2 'Public transcripts' can primarily be found in official documents, reports, speeches, and more formal testimonies and interviews (Bliesemann de Guevara/Kühn 2012, 22).
- 3 I conducted semi-structured interviews of one to two hours with 59 professionals from 2009 to 2011. These included professionals from BMZ, GTZ (German Agency for Technical Cooperation), KfW (German Development Bank), DED (German Development Service), CIM (Centre for International Migration), DSW (German Foundation for World Population), and evaplan (a German consulting firm in the field of public health) in Germany as well as in Tanzania. Professionals included in this study worked on different levels of policy-making, implementation, consulting, and evaluation. Such a plethora of actors with a variety of functions was chosen in order to encounter diverse perspectives (cf. Meuser/Nagel 2009). In Tanzania, I particularly focused on professionals working for TGPSH (Tanzanian German Programme to Support Health), the most significant German health programme in Africa. GTZ, DED, CIM and KfW have been involved in this programme. Over the course of my research in Tanzania, I also had the opportunity to interview several Tanzanian professionals working for German agencies or as partners of German professionals.
- 4 My father worked as a development professional in Germany, South Africa, and Lesotho. I worked extensively as a volunteer and as an intern in development organisations in various African countries as well as in Europe, and am still working as a seminar facilitator for German development agencies and NGOs. Therefore, from an early age, I learned how to talk the development talk and walk the development walk. I thus partly consider this study to be an "insider ethnography" (Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 30) in which I draw upon my experience of growing up and moving around in the 'culture' of German development cooperation.
- 5 All translations of interviews are my own.
- 6 In this paper, the terms 'biomedical', 'biomedicine', and 'medicalise' are used to refer to the dominant Western model of understanding disease and health. This model emerged in Europe in the mid-19th century, is based on scientific reasoning, and was disseminated world-wide by missionaries and colonisers.
- 7 Other studies have, for example, provided evidence that nurses and nurse aides in Tanzanian health facilities often mediate creatively between the spheres of 'modern' biomedical and so-called traditional healing (Langwick 2008).
- 8 According to the CIA World Factbook, Tanzania's 2008 maternal mortality rate was 790 in 2008, which puts Tanzania in 12th place worldwide (CIA World Factbook 2012). Maternal deaths account for 17% of all deaths of women between age 15 and 49 (National Bureau of Statistics and ICF Macro 2010). Provision of reproductive health care for women is generally marked by poor, unaffordable treatment at health care facilities, where staff are not paid sufficiently and often need to pursue additional income-generating activities (Allen 2002).
- 9 These are the highest-ranking staff members of regional and district medical administrations.

<sup>10</sup>According to GTZ (now GIZ), Capacity WORKS is a model “which guides and supports users in determining how the objectives and results agreed on with the partner can be achieved” and “means focusing on the objectives and results of projects and programmes” (GTZ 2010). GTZ entered into contracts with a number of selected firms, which are the only ones with the right to issue certificates for training courses on Capacity WORKS (GTZ 2011).

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### **List of interviews**

- Interview 08: Former DED doctor in a Tanzanian district hospital, February 14, 2010.
- Interview 10: Former senior manager of the German health programme in Tanzania, April 21, 2010.
- Interview 27: DED manager in Tanzania, June 04, 2010.
- Interview 28: German consultant advising the Tanzanian government in a KfW-financed project, June 5, 2010.
- Interview 29: German development professional working in a Tanzanian hospital training centre, June 08, 2010.
- Interview 30: German missionary and nurse who runs her own NGO in Tanzania, June 08, 2010.



- Interview 32: German physician and missionary who headed a mission hospital in Tanzania, June 20, 2010.
- Interview 35: German physician working in a Tanzanian hospital via CIM, June 22, 2010.
- Interview 37: Physician working for DED in a Tanzanian district hospital, June 25, 2010.
- Interview 38: DED hospital advisor in a Tanzanian regional hospital, June 29, 2010.
- Interview 39: German physician working via CIM in a Tanzanian regional hospital, July 03, 2010.
- Interview 40: CIM physician working in a Tanzanian regional hospital, July 05, 2010.
- Interview 41: Tanzanian hospital manager working in a regional hospital, July 05, 2010.
- Interview 43: DED physician working in a district hospital, July 09, 2010.
- Interview 52: Tanzanian former manager of a regional hospital, July 30, 2010.
- Interview 53: CIM physician working in a regional hospital in Tanzania, July 31, 2010.
- Interview 54: Retired German physician working as a volunteer in a Tanzanian mission hospital, June 22, 2010.

## **Abstracts**

While colonial power continues to shape German interventions in the realm of reproductive health in Tanzania, these interventions are also challenged by professionals working in this field. By concentrating on the ‘hidden transcripts’ of development cooperation, this paper highlights the fact that interventions are marked by doubts, criticism, and obstruction. Drawing on interviews with German and Tanzanian professionals, the author elicits the effects of challenges in German development cooperation on the articulation of colonial power and discusses the extent to which these can usefully be described as resistance. The author shows that it is crucial to identify how German professionals come to terms with their doubts, how they criticise development cooperation and with what consequences, and how resistance by Tanzanian partners is dealt with. This paper provides evidence that challenges to development interventions may disturb colonial power, but that this tends not to imply significant resistance, since colonial power takes effect despite, in the face of, and through opposition.



Während deutsche Interventionen im Bereich reproduktiver Gesundheit in Tansania nach wie vor von kolonialer Macht geprägt sind, werden diese Interventionen zugleich von den in diesem Feld tätigen ‚Expert\_innen‘ infrage gestellt. Im Rückgriff auf das Konzept der *hidden transcripts* zeigt dieser Artikel, dass entwicklungspolitische Interventionen von Zweifeln, Kritik und Verweigerung durchzogen sind. Anhand von Interviews mit deutschen und tansanischen ‚Expert\_innen‘ beleuchtet der Autor die Auswirkungen solcher Infragestellungen auf die Artikulation kolonialer Macht im Feld der deutschen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und erörtert, inwiefern Infragestellungen sinnvollerweise als Widerstand beschrieben werden können. Der Autor zeigt, wie wichtig es ist, die Zweifel deutscher ‚Expert\_innen‘ und ihre Kritik an Entwicklungskooperationen zu untersuchen und darüber hinaus die Folgen dieser Kritik und die Reaktionen auf den Widerstand seitens tansanischer ‚Partner\_innen‘ in den Blick zu nehmen. Dieser Beitrag verdeutlicht, dass Infragestellungen von Entwicklungsinterventionen zwar das koloniale Machtgefüge verunsichern können, zugleich in ihrer Widerständigkeit relativiert werden müssen, da koloniale Macht trotz, im Angesicht von und durch Widerspruch wirksam wird.

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**More than Remittances: Resisting the Dominant Discourse and Policy Prescriptions of the Global ‘Migration-Development-Mantra’**

**I. Introduction**

The past decade has witnessed the appearance of international migration on the global policy agenda in the form of increased activities surrounding the governance of migration at the global level: many intergovernmental organisations (such as the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP) have contributed to the debate on international migration from their respective areas of expertise or interests, several international commissions (such as the Global Commission on International Migration, GCIM) and state-led initiatives have placed migration on the global policy agenda, and a number of fora for inter-state dialogue and cooperation have been established at the global and regional levels.

In most of these activities, international migration has been deliberated primarily in its relation to development, i.e. the linkage between, and mutual effects of, international migration and development<sup>1</sup>. At the core have been efforts to highlight the benefits of migration for all, that is for countries of origin, destination and the migrants themselves – the famous ‘triple win’ mantra (GCIM 2005; Wickramasekara 2011). By debating migration in its relation to development, the United Nations have opened up a space for an overdue dialogue on a topic that has notoriously been overshadowed by concerns for national security, xenophobia and rights of states over territorial sovereignty.

Parallel to these state-led efforts (states are the key constituents of international organisations), migrant rights activists have formed global networks to channel their resistance against the dominant migration policy

paradigm which has treated the rights of migrant workers and their families as a side, instead of a core, issue. The starting point for activists, however, is that better rights protection is paramount to migrants' ability to contribute to development. Moreover, they also take a critical stance toward the drive to institutionalise migration as a tool for development, whilst most of these efforts are based on a very narrow, i.e. remittance-focused, view of development.

In this paper, we focus on Asian migrant rights activists who are spearheading the emerging global migrant rights movement. They are among the key drivers for two major reasons: the regional network Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) is one of the largest in the world; and state-sponsored labour migration has been a significant phenomenon in Asia for decades, albeit with historically little consideration for migrant rights. In this sense, international migration has become a structural component of regional economic integration (Athukorala/Manning 1999). The majority of migrants end up working in low-wage/low skill sectors, often under conditions that amount to 'forced labour' (HRW 2006; Amnesty International 2013). No longer willing to endure this state of affairs, resistance by migrants and on behalf of migrants via collective mobilisation has been on the rise across Asia. This is evident in qualitative and quantitative terms: Asian networks and 'networks of networks' have gained in strength and breadth over the last decade and become highly influential in driving the normative and strategic agenda of the migrant rights movement regionally and globally.

However, the Asian networks are split with regards to their ideological base and the resulting strategies they choose for resistance vis-à-vis the emerging global governance of migration: one group favours an 'inside-outside' approach that tries to change the process from within whilst also taking to the streets; another alliance follows a more radical course of fundamental resistance (Rother 2013a). These different tactics notwithstanding, both groups focus their resistance on the discursive level – by challenging the dominant policy prescriptions that link migration to development, the securitisation of migration and the exclusive coupling of civil rights with citizenship – and by promoting more inclusive concepts of human development and migrants' rights as human (and labour) rights.

Our starting point is the debate on global governance approached not from the realm of elite politics, but from the viewpoint of the 'marginal-

ised many' (Grugel/Piper 2007). In so doing, we follow Grugel and Uhlin (2012) in aiming to contribute to the more practical application in International Relations (IR) studies on global governance rather than the abstract deliberations among political theorists around global justice. Especially from the viewpoint of the Global South, as argued by Estevez (2010), global justice is not merely about liberal ideas that emphasise abstract morals as expressed in the general aspects of the universal human rights of a generic individual, but about the actual needs of people in the Global South. As far as global migration governance is concerned, it is the migrant rights movement that injects the voices from 'the people' (that is migrants, their families and communities) into the global debates on migration policy in the attempt to influence its direction.

It is against this backdrop that we argue for a theory of resistance rooted in transformative justice that occurs in the form of institutional change pushed from below (i.e. sub-state or transnational) which is the subject of the section below. We then offer a critique of the 'management' discourse for having led to an instrumentalisation of the migration-development-nexus in its focus on remittances. The final section outlines and analyses the strategies of the two main activist networks in Asia.

This paper is based on extensive fieldwork in the form of participant observation at all relevant global fora discussed here (the conference of the International Labour Organisation, the Global Forum on Migration and Development, the World Social Forum on Migration, and the United Nations High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development) and in-depth interviews with key activists in Geneva, Manila, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta, conducted by one or both of the authors between 2004 and 2013<sup>2</sup>.

## **2. Global governance and resistance**

The idea of global governance in its various conceptualisations has emerged to capture the cooperation or coordination of different actors (governmental, non-governmental and international organisations) within a network made up of formal and informal rules in order to reform institutions of 'the global', with the goal of meeting the challenges of providing

citizens with global public goods (e.g. Rittberger 2001; Kennedy et al. 2002). As a concept which gradually took off after the end of the Cold War, global governance has been used not solely for the description and analysis of complex structures within a globalising world that is no longer subject to classification into ‘first, second and third worlds’. At the same time, this concept is also part of a wider attempt to change this ‘new’ world into something different or better in a normative sense<sup>3</sup> (Habermann 2011). Falk (1995) distinguishes between ‘inhumane’ and ‘humane’ governance, with the former characterised by unequal distribution of wealth and extensive violation of human rights; the latter, in contrast, emphasises people-centred criteria of success, as measured by indicators such as declines in poverty and adherence to human rights. ‘Humane’ governance has been re-conceptualised as rights-based governance based on an approach to rights beyond the sphere of international law, thus reflecting the increasing purchase of rights discourses and rights activism emanating from civil society (Grugel/Piper 2007).

At the global level, it is the role of international organisations (IOs) which has attracted a lot of scholarly attention within the global governance literature, raising questions as to the degree of dependence on powerful states and the level of autonomy of IOs. This strand of the literature questions whether IOs are constrained by the sovereign power of states or whether they are autonomous organisations capable of setting up independent programmes, and even influencing public policy (Loescher 2001; Finnemore 1993; Charnock 2006; on migration, see Geiger 2010). Overall, much of the existing scholarship on IOs has focused on the relationship between IOs and states, with most analyses of global governance having tended to centre upon the operation of power and changes within the configuration of that power in the context of global institutions. Far less is known about ‘bottom-up governance’ and the relationships of conflict and resistance that emerge at the interface between vulnerable groups of people (here, migrant workers), global governance institutions, and states, especially from the perspective of civil society activists.

In the realm of human rights theorising, of which labour and migrant rights are a sub-group<sup>4</sup>, it is the contradictory role of the state – as oppressor or violator of rights on the one hand and the primary agent of justice or deliverer of rights on other hand – that constitutes a paradox (Pogge 2001;

Kuper 2005a). This is the main reason why social movement scholars argue that the state remains the principal target for political action (Grugel 2004; Tarrow 2006)<sup>5</sup>. Yet, there is also increasing recognition of the role and responsibility of transnational actors in global politics (Jönsson/Tallberg 2010), as both violators of human rights and as those responsible for realising rights (Kuper 2005b). In this context, the debate on global governance has concentrated on the question whether cooperation within the international system, together with the integration of new private actors, makes it more democratic, legitimate and accountable (Zürn 2005; Erman/Uhlin 2010). This latter concern has triggered increased interest in the contribution of civil society organisations (CSOs) in democratising public sector institutions at whichever level (Scholte 2011).

In the human rights field, it has been shown that global norms are increasingly shaped through interaction between states, international institutions and activist networks, many of which (such as peasants, farmers, female informal sector workers etc.) today emanate from the Global South (Rajagopal 2012). The fact that global norms and legal enforcement are increasingly influenced by the everyday resistance of ordinary people, channelled through collective organisations, points to the relevance of social movements and, thus, to a theory of resistance derived from the mobilising of hitherto marginal or non-existent political constituencies (Stammers 2009). In this sense, as argued by Rajagopal (2012), it is inadequate to analyse human rights from the exclusive perspectives of states (as realists/positivists would do) or from the exclusive perspective of the individual (as liberals would do).

Hence, we put forward a conceptualisation of resistance that takes transformative mobilisation as its core feature, whereby 'transformative' is used here to refer to changing institutional practices pushed from below via activist networks. In this sense, our case falls into the category of 'overt' resistance (as per the typology developed by Hollander/Einwohner 2004), that is, a category of resistance which involves visible behaviour easily recognisable by targets and observers and, thus, includes collective acts such as mobilisation by, or into, social movements. However, as social movement literature has predominantly concerned itself with grassroots mobilisation, we argue for the need to bring in constructivist International Relations (IR) scholarship that highlights the socially constructed nature of international



relations (in contrast to pure materialism) and thus, opens up an avenue for the role of ideas involved in international advocacy. Unlike classic social movement scholarship, IR has the benefit of addressing political contention in a cross-border context. This allows for an analysis and conceptualisation of transnational social movements. It is transnational advocacy networks that are the primary actor in the pursuit of social justice and human rights vis-a-vis global governance processes and institutions (Keck/Sikkink 1998).

Importantly, IR and development studies scholarship on global governance have also raised the issue of a/the?? democratic deficit inherent in supra-national policy-making processes. Our aim, however, is not simply to highlight the democratic deficit of international organisations in operational and processual terms – which is by now well established – but the actual *achieving* of transformative justice via institutional change. In an abstract sense, resistance concerns struggles for human freedom and liberation from structural oppression and exploitation (Gills/Gray 2012). In relation to migration governance, this relates to greater freedom of mobility that would render migration a choice not a necessity (GCIM 2005; UNDP 2009). In concrete terms, transformation of institutions has to come from the bottom-up – and in the context of global governing institutions, from ‘global justice networks’ (Routledge/Cumbers 2009). Given the fragmented nature of global migration governance, in order for resistance to have an effective impact it has to address this institutional complexity by engaging in equally complex ‘networks of networks’.

The small body of literature on migration governance, and its late arrival on the ‘governance scholarship’ scene, mirrors the general trend in the governance literature in that the few existing studies on the governance of migration have explored its institutional architecture by taking the conventional ‘top-down’ approach with a focus on international and inter-governmental organisations (Newland 2005); by employing a regime perspective (Tanner 2006; Betts 2008); using the lens of governmentality (Kalm 2008; Geiger/Pécoud 2013); from the viewpoint of the national governance level (Gabriel/Pellerin 2007), or through the more established regional institutions such as the European Union (Geddes 2003). Many if not most of these works are characterised by a clear nation-state bias and by viewing migrants as mere objects of governance, thus denying them agency (Rother 2013b). This leaves a gap in knowledge with regard to bottom-up,

non-elitist dynamics aimed at changing the current direction of migration governance in order to benefit the majority of those directly affected: the migrants and their families.

### **3. Governing discourse: managing migration, managing poverty**

Although the international migration of labour has an inherently transnational logic and has become a truly global phenomenon, recognition that, as a policy field, it requires not only bilateral but effective global regulation has come very late when compared to other issue areas – such as trade, health, and finance – that have been subject to global governance for some time (Kalm 2010; Jönsson/Tallberg 2010; Betts 2011). There is now evidence of greater global cooperation between states on a multilateral basis: the establishment of the Global Commission on International Migration in 2003, the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) annual congresses in 2004, 2010 and 2011 devoted to the promotion of labour standards relevant to migrant workers, and the UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development held by the United Nations (UN) in 2006 and 2013. Further evidence is the creation of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFDM), which has been held on an annual basis since 2007. These developments are undoubtedly part of a gradual shift toward the global governance of migration, defined as the proliferation of rules and regulations directing the cross-border mobility of workers.

International cooperation on migration has proliferated over the last 10 years largely based upon a specific type of regulation, referred to by Chi (2008: 500) as “the paradigm of ‘managed temporary labor migration’”. Promoted by various global institutions (UN, ILO, International Organisation for Migration, hereafter IOM), this ‘managed migration’ discourse places great emphasis on the design of formal policies by which origin and destination states try to assert control over migratory flows and employment – that is over income and profit generation as well as the securing of livelihoods through migration. It, thus, claims to constitute a ‘triple win’ situation, benefiting host and source countries as well as the migrants themselves (GCIM 2005). Considering that, for a long time, migration had predominantly been framed as a threat to security, national identity

or social welfare systems, the positive connotation of migrants having the potential to act as ‘agents of development’ can be seen as an indicator of a more balanced perspective on migration. However, this perspective is open to contestation as well, since this ‘new development mantra’ is usually being chanted on a very limited scale with ‘financial remittances’ and ‘transfer of labour skills’ being the high notes. This discourse largely ignores the more far-reaching concept of human development and the significant costs of migration for the majority of those who labour in the bottom rungs of the global economy, often separated from their families (Piper 2010).

Being in practice embedded in an increasingly restrictive policy environment, however, this paradigm seriously circumscribes the rights of migrants<sup>6</sup>, which are otherwise well set out in existing international human and labour rights instruments (for a full list see ILO 2006). Global migration governance has appeared at a specific moment in time when labour has become subject to the downgrading of standards through the loss of traditional union rights, attributed mostly to the spreading of neoliberalism (Munck 2002; Standing 2011; Schierup/Castles 2011). This trend is also reflected in the weakened position of the ILO, the central standard-setting international organisation in the realm of (migrant and non-migrant) employment and work (Standing 2008). Its historical success in promoting labour standards can partly be attributed to its tripartite structure<sup>7</sup>, which has allowed for significant input into the standard-setting process from two non-state actors, that is employers and trade unions. However, these successes are under pressure from within and from the outside. Pressure from within regards the lack of inclusion of bodies beyond the traditional employer-employee nexus that has historically emerged from the specific experience of European labourism, which has led to the exclusion of other non-union, migrant and non-migrant labour organisations (Standing 2008). There are also new state-owned processes of deliberation (for a full list see ILO 2006), such as the above mentioned GFMD, that occur outside the UN framework and pose direct competition to standard setting organisations like the ILO. In the migration field, the main competitor is the IOM, whose mandate is not based on the UN’s human rights framework. Moreover, these extra-UN processes are far less accessible to activist organisations (that is, trade unions and other labour rights organisations) and are, therefore, criticised for lacking accountability (APMM 2012). Thus,

pointing out the increasingly marginal position of standard setting institutions such as the UN and the ILO within the emerging global migration governance, critics have argued that without paying greater attention to migrant workers' rights, the benefits of the alleged 'triple win situation' are skewed in favour of employers in destination countries and the recruitment industry in origin countries (Wickramasekara 2011).

### **3.1 Managing poverty via remittances**

In recent years, the global remittance economy has become highly significant. As demonstrated by the World Bank, flows of monetary remittances continue to increase at a considerable rate and constitute one of the most stable sources of income for families and communities (Mohapatra et al. 2013). Monetary remittances are private savings sent by migrants who live and work abroad to their homes, and are primarily used for investment in housing, education, small businesses or for repayment of debts (Faist 2008; Kunz 2011). There has been an ongoing debate since the late 1980s about what exactly the effects of remittances are on home countries, national development and the global economy. Most commentators agree that remittances have not only remained stable even in times of crisis but actually constitute a growing economy (Kunz 2011; Mohapatra et al. 2013). In 2012 alone, the estimated total global flow of remittances was reported by the World Bank to be USD 510 billion, with USD 401 billion going to developing countries. Estimates put the forecasted annual growth of remittances at 8.8% between 2013 and 2015. Never has the remittance economy been more important to those seeking to govern and manage migration for development at a global scale. It is, therefore, not surprising that a political economy of remittances has emerged (Phillips 2011; Kunz 2011) – and that with disciplining effects (Geiger/Pécoud 2013).

In light of insufficient economic and employment opportunities at home, countries of origin have used emigration as a socio-political valve and thus, one could argue, as a manner of dealing with demographic challenges as well as economic underdevelopment – and ultimately with political unrest or revolt. In the post-World War II period, the discourse of development has been the central governing discourse of international organisations vis-à-vis the Global South – so much so that, as argued by Rajagopal (2002), an international institutional grid, on the very basis of

the idea of ‘development’, was gradually formed for the smooth operation of the world’s politico-economic system. As a result, ‘development’ became part of a specific exercise of power at the time of the Cold War and national security concerns (which have re-emerged in the post-Cold War era in the context of the ‘War on Terror’). In other words, development became the principle machinery for expanding the bureaucratisation of the international sphere (Rajagopal 2002). As Escobar has noted, “the forms of power that have appeared act not by humanitarian concern but by the bureaucratisation of social action” (1992: 53, cited in Rajagopal 2002: 555).

Among the core issues of the UN machinery and agendas of donor agencies today is the migration-development nexus debate, which especially focuses on remittances, as evident from the flurry of reports and evaluations by international financial institutions (particularly the World Bank) and the IOM on this subject (Faist et al. 2013; Kunz 2011). Thus, debates on migration have come to be dominated by concerns for good management practices with the view to harnessing remittances for development purposes. To this end, issues for debate have revolved around lowering the costs of transactions (i.e. banking fees), teaching migrants financial literacy, and turning them into ‘entrepreneurs’. In policy terms, the main reason why temporary contract migration has been championed by origin countries appears to be the finding that when migrants have to leave family members behind and do not emigrate permanently, remittances keep flowing at a constant level.

The importance given to remittances is also reflected in the fact that migrants have come to be celebrated as ‘agents of development’ – albeit with their agency defined in a neoliberal sense of self-help that shifts responsibility to individuals to pay for privatised services that governments do not (or no longer) provide as a public good, as critics would argue (e.g. Rankin 2001).

It is in this specific politico-economic and policy context, that migrant rights activists have politicised the global discourse on international migration and development<sup>8</sup>. It is through this politicisation that their resistance is played out.



#### 4. Resisting migration management from the bottom-up

The complex dynamics and interplays of current global migration governance make attempts at resistance particularly challenging. Among these challenges is the question of towards whom the resistance should actually be directed – how can one resist a global paradigm (as per Chi's argument, 2001)? The perspective of Eni Lestari, an Indonesian migrant domestic worker in Hong Kong and chairperson of the International Migrants' Alliance (IMA), lists the developments that contributed to labour migration increasingly resembling a form of 'modern-day slavery' and can be summarised as follows: by reproducing and enforcing the current neoliberal agenda and by directly exploiting the resources of less-developed countries, the major receiving countries of migrants contribute to a climate in which migration becomes a necessity instead of a choice. When significant parts of a country's population migrate to the very countries that force them to leave their homes, they are often denied basic human and labour rights and, thus, their dignity. And even when working in countries that grant some of these rights, migrants are now increasingly expected to contribute to filling certain development gaps (providing job opportunities and education for children, e.g.) which the countries of origin and destination were responsible for creating in the first place<sup>9</sup>.

The most obvious action of resistance might be not to migrate or send remittances at all. There are in fact 'zero remittance day' campaigns in major labour export countries like the Philippines, but these are mostly symbolic measures, as migrants cannot afford not to support their families back home, for whom remittances are a vital source of income. In both cases, the negative consequences of these actions are felt first and foremost by the migrants themselves. Most migrant organisations, therefore, resort to discursive measures on various levels and with varying goals. The 'global grassroots' IMA aims to 'expose' the neoliberal and imperialist agenda of major states, and hence the global institutions or processes they dominate, especially the GFMD. The Global Coalition on Migration (GCM) favours an 'inside-outside' strategy instead; whilst also blaming the neoliberal framework for the exploitation and abuses of labour migrants, they believe that the most effective way of resisting a dominant paradigm is by changing the agenda from within as well (Rother 2013a).



Both coalitions share several similarities: They act as global umbrella organisations or ‘networks of networks’, representing a membership from all major regions of the world and linking various sectors such as trade unions, faith-based organisations and ‘progressive academics’<sup>10</sup>. The IMA takes resistance one step further, though, by also resisting being dominated by ‘NGOism’ (i.e. professionalisation of advocacy which might lead to activists fighting more for their job security than for their cause and thus creating high dependency on external donors) by declaring itself to be the first genuine grassroots organisation of (not for) migrants: “For a long time, others have spoken on our behalf. Now we speak for ourselves” (IMA 2008: 1). (It still accepts financial support from Western donors, though).

The resistance strategies of both networks are being carried out on two major levels: the transnational and the global. As the name implies, the transnational level reaches beyond the borders of the nation-state, but does not concern itself (exclusively) with the relations between nations (which would be the international level); the main perspective is those of non-state actors which could be transnational corporations or, as in our case, civil society actors. The global level refers to global regimes and institutions or the global public sphere (Piper/Uhlin 2004).

On the transnational level, it is comparatively easier to identify specific targets and plan concrete actions for resistance. The members of the networks resist policies of the countries of origin and destination. Their bargaining power is usually greater in the case of the former, since they usually remain citizens of, and thus voters in, their countries of origins. A pivotal case took place in the transnational political space between the Philippines and Hong Kong almost two decades before remittances gained priority on the global agenda (Rother 2009). In 1982, President Ferdinand Marcos announced a decree which would have forced all Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to remit at least half of their income through Philippine financial institutions (Law 2002: 208). Workers who did not comply with the order were threatened with not getting their visas processed, which would thus prevent them from further migration after return. The decree was met with large opposition due to practical reasons, since these institutions were seen as inefficient by the migrants, and also as a matter of principle: “The bottom line was: we have already made a sacrifice by leaving our families. We did that because the government did not provide us with

decent paying jobs in the Philippines. We did our best and they want to teach us what to do with the money we earn”<sup>11</sup>.

While the Mission contacted its networks back in the Philippines in order to gather information on the decree, the Alliance of Concerned Filipinos spearheaded a campaign in Hong Kong and called on other organisations to join them. In 1984, a loose alliance was formed between 10 domestic worker organisations. The United Filipinos against Forced Remittance (UNFARE) addressed a statement to president Marcos, claiming: “To force us to remit is a curtailment of our freedoms and an intrusion into our private affairs” (Constable 2007: 160). As a response, the order was first reduced by 50 per cent and finally lifted completely on 1 May 1985. Building on the momentum of this success, the alliance was institutionalised and renamed as United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL-HK). It continued its campaigns after the democratic transition under the Aquino government and succeeded in having a customs tax which was imposed in 1987 revoked. Other campaigns targeted the administration in the place of destination and advocated for issues such as the right to maternity leave or resisted plans for the lowering of the minimum wage (sometimes successful, sometimes not). In 2008, UNIFIL-HK was a founding member and the driving force behind the IMA; it is telling that the global alliance was formed in Hong Kong as well.

The transnational and the global agenda are by no means strictly separated, as can be illustrated by the report of the Philippine government to the United Nations Committee on Migrant Workers. As a signatory of the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW), the Philippine government has to report the progress made in implementing the Convention, to the Committee. The Philippines are often praised as an origin-country model of ‘best practices’ in migration management by institutions such as the IOM or the US-based think tank Migration Policy Institute (MPI). But when the government officials tried to present themselves in a similar manner in the 10<sup>th</sup> reporting sessions in 2009, the Committee responded with criticism that drew heavily from a civil society shadow report written by Philippine migrant organisations which would later become influential in the creation of the GCM. The Committee also recommended that the Philippine government as State Party guarantee the broader participation of civil society NGOs.

This resistance on the national/transnational level also used ‘blaming and shaming’ strategies on the global level, which in turn (not unlike Keck/Sikkink’s 1998 ‘boomerang model’) also led to some specific outcomes on the national level. In a LOIPR (List of Issues Prior to Reporting) meeting organised by the Center for Migrant Advocacy (CMA), (which is a member of Migrant Forum in Asia – MFA), which in turn is a member of the GCM) and witnessed by one of the authors in Manila in December 2012, the Philippine government representatives took obvious care to include or at least hear the migrant organisations’ agenda before reporting to the Committee.

On the global level, such specific successes are harder to achieve; while both networks may agree on criticising countries like the Philippines in shadow reports etc. and only vary in the degree of their respective criticisms, the ‘inside-outside’ and the attack-from-the-outside-approaches might be harder if not impossible to reconcile in cases like the GFMD. Here the goal of the IMA is to ‘expose’ the Forum as a place for the commodification of labour and as a mere front-end for imperialist and neoliberal strategies. Thus, when members and affiliates of the GCM try to work inside the GFMD in order to ‘mainstream’ their own progressive agenda, they are seen as supporting and legitimising, instead of resisting, the process in the eyes of the IMA.

The ‘inside-outside’ proponents counter these accusations by pointing out some signs of progress which they claim are at least partly the result of their approach. These become most obvious when comparing the first and the second UN-HLD in 2006 and 2013 (between which 6 GFMD meetings were held). While the issue of migrants’ rights was virtually absent from the first meeting, it found its way into many speeches and papers presented at the second one. Similar observations can be made for topics such as that of a broader view of human development that reaches beyond remittances and the acknowledgement of the situation of irregular migrants.

Besides discursive measures, some more material modes of resistance might still be needed, though. On the evening before the start of the second HLD, it suddenly seemed for a while as if the participation of Civil Society in the meeting might get?? be?? drastically limited. The UN, in other words, tried to ‘discipline’ rights activists by means of heavy-handed control over the accreditation process. However, apparently some reconsideration took place overnight. According to GCM representatives this was partly due to a march that their parallel event, the PGA, held on the same day; thus, the

UN organisers might have decided that it would put them in a bad light if there were similar protests right outside their gathering, so they at least partially gave in and allowed some statements and active participation. This can be seen as a successful example of an inside-outside-strategy; the IMA, on the other hand opted (for the most part) to stay outside the meeting altogether and instead voiced some more fundamental resistance at their own protest activities, as summarised by the statement of Eni Lestari above.

## **5. Concluding remarks**

The nascent global migrant rights movement is spearheaded by organisations that are located in the Global South (many of which are in Asia) or those the advocacy of which is based on the experience of migrant workers who stem from the Global South. The most common denominator of the two ‘networks of networks’ described and analysed in this paper in regard to their different strategies of resisting the dominant global direction that migration policy is taking is their common aim to liberate migrant workers from their role as ‘agents of development’, understood in the neoliberal sense of promoting self-help and individual responsibility whilst states keep on rolling back. The two networks do so by framing economic migration as ‘forced’ resulting in their demand to turn migration into “a choice, not a necessity” This is to be achieved on the basis of creating decent work ‘here and there’, i.e. better job opportunities at home and abroad. In this sense, the global migrant rights movement illustrates a form of resistance that is rooted in transformative justice as linked to institutional change.

More concretely, migrant rights activists, their organisations and networks are resisting the narrow conception of the link between migration and development that currently dominates the discourse in national and global fora by mostly focusing on financial remittances. These are private funds after all, and it is highly questionable if not immoral to suggest that a marginalised group like low-wage temporary contract or undocumented migrants should be instrumentalised to address development goals, goals which neither their countries of origin nor international development aid projects have been able to meet. Instead, activists strive to shift the focus to the more comprehensive concept of people-centred ‘human develop-

ment'. Moreover, demands for an all-inclusive definition of development are understood as a global responsibility.

Part of this resistance is the politicisation of the 'management' discourse in order to counteract the latter's tendency to be couched in technical language and the clinical reduction to facts, by drawing attention to the social costs of migration and the hardships faced by the many who labour in the bottom rungs of the global productive and reproductive economy.

To achieve their goals, the two 'networks of networks' discussed in this paper employ two different tactics: while the GCM follows an 'inside-outside' approach and tries to mainstream its agenda by engaging international institutions, the IMA predominantly wants to 'expose the real agenda' of fora like the GFMD from the outside. While both networks most certainly do not cooperate or even coordinate their efforts, their modes of resistance can, to a degree, be seen as complimentary by aiming to change the policy discourse whilst also addressing the root causes of migration from a rights perspective.

The challenge of course, lies in the sheer complexity of global governance architecture: there is not one single global institution to be held responsible (on the contrary one can count up to 50 institutions involved in the field of international migration), so that their advocacy has to be directed towards numerous actors on the transnational and global level. The fragmented global governing architecture and the fact that extra-UN fora have dominated over standard setting processes have so far posed serious obstacles to the ability of migrant rights organisations to go beyond discursive strategies. If the ILO has managed to gain a position at the centre of migration governance – and its new position paper from 2013 seems to imply that it will make greater efforts in this regard – this situation could change. However, the UN HLD on migration in New York the same year has showed that the powerful receiving countries are most likely to continue resisting such a shift – several of them, including the US and the EU and its member states, emphasised their preference for the IOM to remain "the leading organisation in migration" as it predominantly serves states' interests (GFMD blog 2013).

1 This dramatic shift started with the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. Chapter X of its Programme of Action outlines one of the most comprehensive texts related to migration adopted by the international com-



munity, which was undertaken primarily within a development framework. In retrospect, the 1974 and 1984 World Population Conferences had already begun addressing various aspects of migration and their relation to development. But it was at the Cairo Conference that the marrying of the migration and development nexus was thoroughly and permanently cemented. Since then, the twin issues of migration and development have become intertwined into a singular topic in almost all major international fora. The UN itself considers it as a sub-item with biennial periodicity on the agenda of the 2nd Committee of the General Assembly. This famously led to the decision in 2003 to convene the first High Level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development, which took place in 2006, and the second, in 2013.

- 2 We thank the anonymous reviewer(s) and the guest editors for their helpful comments and assistance, which allowed us to develop this paper. Stefan Rother would also like to thank the Freiburg Southeast Asia Area Studies Program, supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), for helping to enable his participation in several global meetings.
- 3 The normative direction of governance reform has been debated in the case of various marginalised groups such as children and migrant workers (Grugel/Piper 2007), gender or equality of women (see Goetz 2009, Nussbaum 2000) and the poor more broadly (Pogge 2001).
- 4 There is a debate among scholars as to whether labour rights are human rights. For our purposes, it is sufficient to say that labour rights can be defined as a set of rights that humans possess by virtue of their status as workers. Moreover, in the context of global governance, ILO labour standards are regarded as a sub-set of international legal instruments. Additionally, on the activist side, global unions such as the BWI and PSI actively engage with global governance institutions.
- 5 In the case of states with oppressive political regimes, transnational activist scholarship has argued that it is through pressure from the ‘outside in’, through transnational activist networks, that states are ultimately forced to deliver on human rights (Keck/Sikkink 1998; Piper/Uhlin 2004).
- 6 The main rights issues for migrant rights advocates criticising this paradigm revolve around the lack of family unification, the strictly temporary character of migration (one to three years), the involvement of private, profit-oriented recruitment agencies and the employer-tied nature of work permits, all of which exposes migrants to great levels of dependency and abuse at the workplace (Piper 2010).
- 7 This structure refers to three parties that make up its constituency: worker organisations (trade unions), employer associations and governments.
- 8 In this context, the notion of ‘forum shopping’ has been used to describe states’ choices for suitable sites to advance their interests. We would instead refer to this phenomenon as ‘forum shifting’ in order to reflect the perspective of political activist organisations like trade unions and migrant rights groups for whom this choice given to states means fewer opportunities for participation and less access.
- 9 Interview with Eni Lestari, New York, October 2013.
- 10 Piper is among those ‘progressive academics’: she is co-founder and Vice President of the Global Migration Policy Associates (GMPA), which in turn is a member of the Global Coalition of Migration.
- 11 Interview with Cynthia Tellez, Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers 13 March 2007.



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## **Abstracts**

During the past decade there has been an increased level of activity surrounding the governance, at the global level, of worker migration. One of the discursive frameworks under which much migration policy is discussed is the migration-development nexus. Parallel to state-led efforts such as international commissions and fora, has been the formation of migrant rights activist networks. They have begun to voice their resistance against the dominant migration policy paradigm, which is based on very little concern for the rights of migrant workers and their families. We thus argue for a theory of resistance rooted in transformative justice that occurs in the form of institutional change pushed from below (i.e. sub-state or transnational). We then offer a critique of the ‘management’ discourse for having led to an instrumentalisation of the migration-development-nexus through its focus on remittances. The final section outlines and analyses the strategies of the two main activist networks in Asia. Their different tactics notwithstanding, both groups focus their resistance on the discursive level – by challenging the dominant paradigms of migration and development and by promoting more inclusive concepts of human development and migrants’ rights as human rights.

Die Governance von Arbeitsmigration hat im vergangenen Jahrzehnt auch auf der globalen Ebene an Bedeutung gewonnen. In diesem Rahmen wird Migration verstärkt als ein Instrument der Entwicklungs-



litik diskutiert. Neben neuen, von den Nationalstaaten etablierten globalen Foren und Kommissionen sind auch Netzwerke von Migrant\_innenrechtsorganisationen entstanden. Diese artikulieren zunehmend ihren Widerstand gegen das dominante Paradigma in der Migrationspolitik, das den Rechten von Migrant\_innen und ihren Familienangehörigen nur wenig Raum zugesteht. Wir verwenden daher in diesem Artikel einen theoretischen Ansatz, in dem Widerstand auf dem Kampf für Transformation beruht. Diese kann erreicht werden durch einen institutionellen Wandel, der von unten, etwa auf der substaatlichen oder transnationalen Ebene, eingeleitet wird. In einem zweiten Teil diskutieren wir, wie der Diskurs zu *migration management* instrumentalisiert wird, um vor allem den regelmäßigen Fluss der Rücküberweisungen (*remittances*) zu gewährleisten. Abschließend diskutieren wir die Strategien der beiden zentralen Aktivist\_innennetzwerke, die sich in Asien für Migrant\_innenrechte einsetzen. Auch wenn sie auf unterschiedliche Taktiken setzen, erfolgt ihr Widerstand jeweils auf der diskursiven Ebene – indem sie das dominante ‚Entwicklung durch Migration‘-Paradigma hinterfragen und für umfassendere Konzepte von *human development* sowie für die Verknüpfung von Migrant\_innen- und Menschenrechten kämpfen.

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MARIA MARKANTONATOU

**Social Resistance to Austerity: Polanyi's 'Double Movement'  
in the Context of the Crisis in Greece**

**1. Introduction**

The dismantling of the Keynesian regulation since the mid-1970s, together with a number of policies of shrinking the welfare state, processes of privatisation and labour flexibilisation, brought Polanyi's critique of liberalism to the foreground, a critique that had been neglected during the Cold War period, when the stakes were different (Block 2008: 38). After the 2008 crisis in the US, which spread in the Eurozone and hit hard countries like Greece, causing widespread social discontent, his critique of the concept of a self-regulating market and his idea of the "double movement" are even more timely.

Polanyi's central thesis was that neither was the quest for profit a natural inclination of individuals, nor was the free market independent from political interventions, as claimed by classical liberal thinkers who he sharply criticised. On the contrary, for him, "the idea of a self-adjusting market implied a stark utopia. Such an institution could not exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness" (Polanyi 2001: 3). In his work, he disputed the basic principles of economic liberalism, examined its impact on society and labour and looked at the measures and ways of the "self-protection of society" from the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century up until the crisis of the 1930s, focusing mainly on England.

Polanyi described as a "double movement" (2001: 79, 136) what he perceived as the fundamental feature of the whole 19<sup>th</sup> century period, namely "the action of two organizing principles in society, each of them

setting itself specific institutional aims, having the support of definite social forces and using its own distinctive methods” (ibid.: 138). The first principle, economic liberalism, was supported by entrepreneurial classes and aimed at the establishment of a self-regulating market. The second one concerned social protection for all those disadvantaged by the market and aimed at the conservation of man, nature and society.

The “double movement” is placed within the historical context described by Polanyi (1944) in *The Great Transformation*. This transformation took place in the period starting in 1834 with the abolition of the Speenhamland Law (1795), which had been keeping labour wages low by replenishing them with an allowance proportional to the wheat price (ibid.: 81-89). In that period, the wages in urban areas were higher, pushing those in the villages to rise. As Polanyi (ibid.: 90-107) explained in detail, that system, which delayed the proletarianisation of rural workers, was primarily in the interest of land owners and traditional authorities who sought a safe distance from the urban areas’ mechanised production and higher wages. The volatility of profits in the newborn industrial sector led the jobless to migrate to villages, thus transferring the problem of unemployment to the local authorities, who tried to solve it mainly through the allowances. With the abolition of Speenhamland and the Poor Law Reform, the poor were entitled to an allowance only if committed to the workhouses, which, in the meantime, had become places of social coercion and immiseration. These measures, which led to an unprecedented pauperisation, aimed at the establishment of a competitive labour market, no longer merely at a local level, but at a national one. By the time of the 1873–76 recession, labour had already been integrated into the competitive market, but what Polanyi called the “self-protection of society” (ibid.: 87), or the driving force of the “double movement”, had also set in: “While the organization of world commodity markets, world capital markets, and world currency markets under the aegis of the gold standard gave an unparalleled momentum to the mechanism of markets, a deep-seated movement sprang into being to resist the pernicious effects of a market-controlled economy” (ibid.: 79-80).

Resistance to labour commodification gradually led to the establishment of such social rights as the recognition of trade unions and the reduction of working time, to laws on child labour, the gradual introduction of pensions and so on. Polanyi (ibid.: 148) mentioned that the idea of a “double

movement” could also be found in the works of liberals such as Spencer and Mises. But, while liberals saw interests hostile to the market as the only obstacles to its self-regulation, for Polanyi (*ibid.*) the very “concept of a self-regulating market was utopian, and its progress was stopped by the realistic self-protection of society”: this was his central thesis.

One of the most prominent debates in today’s Polanyian literature concerns the question to what extent the conflicting poles of the double movement, economy and society, have come to a balance in the course of capitalist development. For instance, Devine (2007) sees, on the basis of the British experience, the Keynesian postwar regulation as the zenith of the countermovement (*ibid.*: 34). However, this balance based on full employment, was, according to Devine, unstable, as labour costs could not be compressed while at the same time oligopolistic markets allowed prices to rise. That led to a wage-price spiral with the state supplying money to maintain the seamless function of the market (*ibid.*: 37-38). Eventually, the Thatcherite Right prevailed over alternatives that proposed wage increases with productivity and worker involvement in investment planning, and sacrificed full employment while promoting the rhetoric of a people’s capitalism or property-owning democracy, in the process of treating welfare beneficiaries as customers etc. (*ibid.*: 39-45).

Lacher (2007) argues against the view that the double movement came to a balance during the Keynesian period. Elaborating on Polanyi’s own criteria about what leads to an economy’s disembedding itself from society (profit motive, commodification of labour, land and money, market self-regulation) and what is the deeper problem inherent in the market system (degradation and destruction of social relations and nature), Lacher notes that there has been no qualitative change in the postwar market system. On the contrary, its basic characteristics become more deeply entrenched. Postwar state intervention is part of the protectionism-liberalisation interplay that Polanyi saw as typical of the 1870–1930 period and constitutes by no means a negation of the fundamental characteristics of the market system. Therefore, the postwar regulation was anything but a new great transformation (*ibid.*). Views that claim the opposite emanate from the confusion between reembedding and protectionism and actually take as a “fulfillment of Polanyi’s vision the very social order against which he warned so insistently” (*ibid.*: 62).

Polanyi's concept of the "double movement" has served to interpret current developments in various contexts and studies (for instance about different social movements opposing market expansion), case studies such as India's National Alliance of People's Movements (Levien 2007), or quantitative studies of discontent vis-a-vis neoliberalism in the 1990s with regard to disadvantaged countries, social groups and gender (Levien/Paret 2012). On the other hand, incompatibilities have been identified between the conjuncture to which Polanyi referred when speaking of "double movement" and today. For instance, according to Bugra (2007), while the countermovement described by Polanyi demanded protectionist legislation from the state, nowadays movements are much less directed towards the state, being rather more interested in society. In today's neoliberalism, the state is considered more of a problem rather than a solution, so that even the Left is reluctant in articulating demands for state interventionism (ibid.: 183). This can be seen, Bugra notes, in the new emphasis on 'society', as seen in various forms of voluntary initiatives, philanthropy etc. over the last years (ibid.: 183-184).

The Polanyian perspective has, thus, served as a context useful for discussing, not only liberalism in general, but also more specific aspects thereof. It has also formed a starting point for understandings of the processes of financial deregulation and liberalisation since the abandonment of Bretton Woods (Özel/Özgür 2010) or debates about the nature and function of the EU. As regards the latter, Caporaso and Tarrow (2009: 609) argue that the European Court of Justice attempts to shape market processes in an increasingly social way, whereas Höpner and Schäfer (2010: 5-7) counter-suggest that the EU resembles a Hayekian order as it liberalises markets rather than constraining them, and that the real Polanyian content lies in the EU-sceptical reactions of those afraid of being the losers in an integrated market (ibid.: 28). Concerning the Eurozone in particular, Seccarecia and Correa (2003: 11) discussed the affinities with the Gold Standard of the 1930s and the social effects of the hard currency policies in that era, as already described by Polanyi. Today, as Holmes (2013: 285) notes, "the format of monetary union without fiscal union echoes precisely the constructed split between economic and sociopolitical governance that Polanyi observed underpinning the gold standard".

In spite of all the differentiations in the use and interpretation of Polanyian concepts, what is crucial is that the “double movement” does not simply concern the Speenhamland, the inter-war or the Keynesian periods, but poses a deeper and wider problem, “the problem of market society”, which essentially “never disappears” (Holmes 2013: 279). Therefore, “Polanyi’s thesis remains relevant today not merely because the spectre of the free market has returned in the conceptual packaging of ‘globalisation’, but because the same binary problematization of economy and society – marketization and protection – still shapes the way that political economic questions are problematized” (ibid.: 279). This is why a discussion of the tension between economy and society from a Polanyian perspective is meaningful in the Greek context. In the next two sections, an overview is given of the social consequences of the crisis in Greece and the forms of social resistance they induced. Then, it is discussed how Polanyi’s approach can provide an ideal-typical framework of understanding and interpreting the “double movement” that was set in motion in Greece with the onset of the crisis.

## **2. Socio-economic consequences of the crisis**

The management of the crisis in Greece relied on a series of agreements between the Greek governments and the Troika (ECB, EU and the IMF), namely the so called ‘Memoranda’ that would secure tranches of ‘rescue’ loans under the condition of strict austerity. From 2010 to 2013, an avalanche of measures was implemented by three consecutive governments, with dramatic consequences for labour and the welfare state. These included wage cuts, the abolition of jobs and dismissals in the public sector, labour deregulation, mergers and closures of public organisations, privatisations, and a plethora of new taxes.

In the public sector, wages and pensions were slashed by 20% in three years (and up to 50% in several cases), and so were social benefits. Laws such as the ‘Labour Reserve’ (entailing the dismissal of tens of thousands of employees who would be paid 60% of their basic salary for one year and then would be permanently removed if no vacancies were found in other services), or the ‘One to Ten’ (one recruitment for ten retirements) and abolition of positions drastically shrank the public sector, thus degrading



its services. From 2010 to 2013, a series of laws served to implement public spending cuts and privatisations. Mergers of smaller municipalities at the level of local administration took place through the ‘Kallikratis Plan’ and mergers and closures of university departments were planned through the ‘Athena Plan’. At the level of healthcare, hospital beds were reduced, medical expenditure was cut and even psychiatric clinics closed down. The ‘Hellenic Public Asset Development Fund’ was established in order to privatise the remaining publicly owned enterprises (utilities, ports, airports, railways etc.) and assets. In the companies under privatisation, more than 40% of the jobs were lost, as many employees were forced into early retirement. In the private sector, the national minimum wage was reduced and collective wage bargaining was weakened by measures favouring enterprise-wide and, finally, individual agreements. Dismissals were facilitated, notice periods shortened and severance payments were drastically reduced (for an overview of the measures, see Markantonatou 2013).

Deep and lasting recession came as a result. Unemployment reached 27.9% in June 2013 and 61.5% for people under 25 years old (Eurostat 2013a). More than one in two unemployed have been jobless for more than one year and one in three of them have not worked for more than two years (*ibid.*). In only one year (2010–2011) median income and the poverty threshold fell by 8%, but, even then, the population under that threshold increased further, from 19% to 21% (Eurostat 2013b), while jobless households have more than doubled, exceeding 1,300,000 (Hellenic Statistical Authority 2013). At the same time, uninsured labour rose from 25% of those employed in 2010 to 36% in 2012 (Ministry of Labour 2010, 2012).

As a result, in 2011 the continuous drop in GDP surpassed the historical maximum for the entire postwar period, with a record dip of -7.1%, lower than that of -6.4% in 1974, when the military dictatorship had collapsed (World Bank 2013). At the same time, the rising taxation and the rapidly deteriorating living standards had a series of side effects. For instance, public health deteriorated when heating oil and diesel prices reached parity and households’ heating costs rose by 40%. As a result, wood was heavily used as a replacement fuel in winter 2012, causing smog, heavy air pollution and respiratory problems (Dabilis 2013). Finally, homelessness increased by 25% from 2009 to 2011 (FEANTSA 2012), while suicides hit record levels and rose by 75% from 2009 to 2011 (Kentikelenis et al. 2011).



These developments resulted in the emergence of several forms of social resistance by various actors, such as labour unions and worker collectives, movements of civil disobedience, the so called “movement of the squares” and various solidarity initiatives. Some of these forms of resistance are summarised in the following section.

### 3. Forms of social resistance

Trade unions reacted by means of hundreds of strikes, rallies, occupations and massive demonstrations. In 2011 alone, there were 91 strikes in the public sector and 240 in the private sector – mostly within firms but also across professional categories or in whole sectors or branches of the economy. Among them, at least nine long-lasting strikes took place, with the most prominent example offered by the nine-month strike at Greek Steelworks. There, the strikers opposed plans for a reduction of working hours and wages by 40% and demanded that workers dismissed in 2011 be rehired. In comparison with earlier years, participation was massive; the rally that took place in Athens during the general strike on October 19-20, 2011 has been estimated to be the largest in the last 40 years. The most frequent demands in the private sector concerned unpaid wages, hiring back the dismissed staff, opposition to job rotation, restarting closed businesses etc. In the public sector, strikers opposed the ‘Labour Reserve’ law, wage cuts and expenditure cuts, privatisations etc. (for an account of the frequency and intensity of strikes until late 2011 see Katsoridas/Lampousaki 2012). At the same time, other actions were carried out:

- *Usage of occupied infrastructure*, e.g. the continuation of the public national TV broadcaster’s programme by its staff, and transmission via the internet, after the government suddenly announced its closure and the dismissal of more than 2,500 employees, leading to continuous protests outside the broadcaster’s central premises for many weeks; the initiative of the employees of the *Eleftherotypia* daily to publish their own issues while on a strike that lasted for months; broadcasting employees’ demands from the premises of the ‘Alter TV’ private channel, where the staff went on strike for several weeks and used the channel’s facilities to let the public know of the intrigues concerning the firm’s bankruptcy; occupation of

the local general hospital at the district of Kilkis and its reopening on the basis of self-management and free health care (Filopoulou 2012).

- *Defence of public goods threatened by privatisation*, e.g. resistance to water privatisation in Thessaloniki and the formation of the “Initiative 136”, which proposed that users themselves purchase the city’s water utility shares through neighbourhood cooperatives which would make up a single overall cooperative (Wainwright 2013).
- *Social protection, solidarity and disobedience*, as in the case of the electricity utility unionists who refused to cut the power in households that were unable to pay a new emergency tax incorporated in the bill, or reinstated electricity where it had already been cut (Katsoridas/Lampousaki 2012: 97-98). Other citizen initiatives worked in a similar direction. That was, for instance, the case with the ‘No Pay’ movement, consisting of local committees opposed to paying increasingly expensive tolls for incomplete roads while private companies would profit from the revenues (Exadaktylos/Zahariadis 2012: 18). Considering that citizens had already paid through their taxes (Tsakiris/Aranitou 2010: 13-14), members of the movement encouraged users of public transport not to pay tickets and blocked ticket validating machines. Similar disobedience practices spread among citizens opposed to paying a new ‘supplementary housing tax’ or among medical staff who allowed patients not to pay fees at state hospitals (Becatoros 2011).

Next to the forms of social resistance and actions that responded directly to the austerity policies, initiatives were formed to offer relief from some of the consequences of the crisis (e.g. ‘social kitchens’, exchange and give-away bazaars, free tutoring, free health care provision), or to protect and improve public spaces and parks from restructuring plans (Malkoutzis 2013). Mobilisations also took place, which might have had a regional focus or originated in the pre-crisis period but, because of the conjuncture, became symbols of resistance to neoliberal policies. A notable example is the case of the Chalkidiki district (Oikonomides 2013: 55-56) where locals opposed plans for gold mining on the grounds of serious environmental consequences, by protesting, preventing works and clashing with the police.

The range and speed of the austerity measures led to the emergence of additional forms of resistance, expressing a broad social discontent. Early summer 2011, before the enactment of the Mid Term Fiscal Strategy

(MTFS), was a turning point for large parts of the population who realised that the measures would not be relaxed, despite their painful consequences. Then, the movement of the 'Indignants' or 'movement of the square' made its debut at Syntagma Square, in front of the Parliament building in Athens. Within the next few days, protests, popular assemblies and sit-ins spread to other districts of the capital and other cities with the explicit aim of deterring the voting of the MTFS. During the June 15<sup>th</sup> general strike, the protesters retained the control of the Square despite heavy police repression that Amnesty International (2011a) denounced. However, the next general strike (28 and 29 June), and the encirclement of the Parliament called by the 'Indignants', did not prevent the approval of the MTFS, and the protesters, once again, faced violent repression (Amnesty International 2011b). The movement faded a month later. However, open popular assemblies continued to operate in other districts of Athens and other cities across the country for a year (Pantazidou 2012: 12).

The Syntagma Square was a place of protest for diverse social groups. At the upper part of the square, opposite to the Parliament, a nationalistic tone prevailed among a gathered crowd jeering in chorus and shouting 'thieves' and 'traitors' to the political leadership. At the lower part of the square, where daily open assemblies and talks would take place, there was a stronger politicisation and a radical spirit expressed through demands for 'real democracy' and 'direct democracy'. The rage against austerity policies prevailed on both sides. Nevertheless, the fact that petty bourgeois strata would mainly gather in the upper part, whereas the working class, precariously employed youth and unemployed people would mainly gather in the lower part (Sotirakopoulos/Sotiropoulos 2013: 447-448), reflected a radical differentiation in the understandings of the crisis and its causes. This was vividly imprinted in the electoral results of June 2012 when the leftwing SYRIZA, with a mere 4.60% of the vote in 2009, reaped the main part of social discontent and became the major opposition with 26.89%, but at the same time, the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn displayed a steep rise from 0.29% in 2009 to 6.95% (Hellenic Republic 2012).

Overall, these new forms of social resistance did not manage to inhibit austerity policies. On the other hand, new social dynamics were formed, reflecting a nascent articulation of forces brought about by the crisis, and in view of the transformation that the country was experiencing.

#### 4. The speed and justification of the austerity measures

Polanyi's focus was the era of the Gold Standard, which is not to be compared with the architecture of today's EMU. Characteristic of the Gold Standard era was the competitive coexistence of different national currencies, which allowed governments some degree of flexibility through access to their national central banks (Seccareccia/Correa 2013: 11). EMU and the ECB's non-interventionist role do not allow governments such flexibility. However, despite the crucial differences, there are some common characteristics both in the period of the Gold Standard and that of the EMU, such as the presence of an international *haute finance* intertwined with states, a deteriorating democratic legitimacy, especially in small countries, a self-regulating market that is shaken at the level of finance (ibid.) and a split between economic and sociopolitical governance (Holmes 2013: 285). This is why Polanyi's following quotation written for the 1920s reminds us of the situation in today's Greece:

“The repayment of foreign loans and the return to stable currencies were recognized as the touchstone of rationality in politics; and no private suffering, no restriction of sovereignty, was deemed too great a sacrifice for the recovery of monetary integrity. The privations of the unemployed made jobless by deflation; the destitution of public servants dismissed without a pittance; even the relinquishment of national rights and the loss of constitutional liberties were judged a fair price to pay for the fulfilment of the requirement of sound budgets and sound currencies, these a priori of economic liberalism” (Polanyi 2001: 148).

With the onset of the crisis, measures ranging from the socialisation of bank losses to the imposition of austerity packages were deployed in countries of the European periphery. The Eurozone elites did not challenge the liberal perceptions of a self-regulating market, the consequences of which had been described by Polanyi. On the contrary, they rushed to deepen its institutional setting (Busch et al. 2012: 8), as shown, for instance, by the Six Pact in October 2011 or the Fiscal Compact in December 2011, which dictate automatic sanctions in case of non-compliance with the fiscal rules (ibid.).

The crisis, as Stockhammer and Onaran (2012: 200) underline, is the result of economic policies aimed at labour market flexibility and financial

integration after the introduction of the Euro. These policies, as the authors show, had mediocre results with regard to growth, high unemployment in many countries, a shift of income distribution in favour of capital and the emergence of two growth models, a credit-led and an export-led, both of which are unviable in the long run (*ibid.*). However, the management of the crisis aggravated rather than cured these problems.

Bailouts of banks and even national economies during the Eurozone crisis did not form a solution for society, but rather an intervention aiming at rescuing the financial markets and preserving the principles of the self-regulating market while delivering severe blows to labour and the remaining welfare state. Likewise, top-level agreements such as the Fiscal Compact are interventions that highlight this fundamental element of the self-regulating market, an element that Polanyi always underlined. The capitalist market was never really ‘free’ or ‘self-regulating’, but constantly relied on state intervention and institutional regulation. To quote just one passage, Polanyi commented on the Report of the Gold Delegation of the League of Nations with the following words: “What the report did not say was that in the course of these vain deflationary efforts free markets had not been restored though free governments had been sacrificed. Though opposed in theory to interventionism and inflation alike, economic liberals had chosen between the two and set the sound-currency ideal above that of non-intervention. In so doing they followed the logic inherent in a self-regulating economy” (Polanyi 2001: 242).

In Greece, austerity measures were implemented at a remarkable speed. At various points of his work, Polanyi had hinted at the role of speed in implementing policies during periods of social change, e.g. in his evaluation of the Tudor and early Stuart policies concerning the enclosures in 16<sup>th</sup> century England. The conversion of arable land to pastures through the enclosures that had “appropriately been called a revolution of the rich against the poor” (Polanyi 2001: 37) deprived thousands peasants and poor growers of land from the means to subsist. In the course of the development of the cotton industry (an important thrust to the Industrial Revolution), driven by an often violent process, as was the case with the enclosures, colossal impoverishment of the dispossessed emerged. Were it not for the Tudor and early Stuart policy, which decelerated the developments and spared some time for adjustment to the new conditions, “the rate of that



progress might have been ruinous, and have turned the process itself into a degenerative instead of a constructive event” (ibid.: 39).

The kind of social change currently under way in Greece, does not, of course, compare with the attempt to disembed the precapitalist institution of the commons, as described by Polanyi. It is a case, though, of sheer rapidity in the imposition of austerity policies. Not only had it dramatic social consequences, but it also caused massive electoral losses for the parties that backed the austerity packages (the social-democratic PASOK, the rightwing Nea Demokratia and the far right LAOS), as shown by their rates before and after the crisis<sup>1</sup>.

Despite electoral disapproval of this shock-therapy, the proponents of the programme not only did not retract from its implementation, but ceaselessly reproached Greece for delays in implementing the measures. For instance, according to Olli Rehn, “the delays were caused mainly because of a lack of implementation and political turmoil in Greece, which created the delays in the first place” (Chrysoloras 2012). However, according to OECD (2013), Greece was the world leader in terms of the extent and rapidity of structural reforms during 2011–2012<sup>2</sup>, and even more remarkably, in the particular sectors where the so called “obstacles to reform” were significant. These “obstacles to reform”, also identified as “powerful pressure groups” in another OECD report (2012: 31), essentially meaning the resistant unions and professional groups, justified a rapid “big-bang approach”, as “probably the only option”, in order to create structures that “are ‘fit for purpose’ to implement the reform agenda”.

In the Greek case, such an understanding of society’s resistance and the effort to defend itself as a mere “obstacle to reform” coincides with the liberal view, aptly rendered by Polanyi: if the self-regulating market did not function or failed, it was because specific social groups opposed it, as they exerted pressure on the state with their demands, thus leading to a bloating bureaucratic state and interventionism since the late 1860s. As a result, proponents of economic liberalism insisted, as Polanyi (2001: 157) eloquently described, that their policy “never had a chance, but was strangled by short-sighted trade unionists, Marxist intellectuals, greedy manufacturers, and reactionary landlords”.

This liberal approach is utterly characteristic of Greece’s case, the main criticism towards those who reacted to austerity measures being that they



were responsible for the programme downturns (Markantonatou 2013). Proponents of austerity, domestically and abroad, simply attribute its downturns to social resistance against it by representing society, unions, the unemployed and those who depend on welfare as rent-seekers, or selfish opponents of the free market etc. (ibid.). According to a report on Greece by the European Commission (2012: 11), “[a] return to sustained growth can only be achieved when the structural reform agenda is fully and swiftly implemented. This will require breaking the resistance of vested interests and the prevailing rent-seeking mentality of powerful pressure groups”.

Even unemployment was understood in the same way: social resistance increased political pressure and slowed down the deregulation of labour, thus depriving it of the ‘necessary’ flexibility, which caused further joblessness: “Labor market reforms encountered resistance [...]. The wage bargaining system was reformed, but there were few firm level agreements and the Fund judged labor market reforms not to have delivered enough flexibility. The absence of early actions to reduce private wages may have aggravated the job losses from the economic downturn” (IMF 2013: 18).

Likewise, demonisation of union demands was part of such a domestic neoliberal management of the crisis. “I will not succumb to sectoral interests of groups who are just afraid of losing their privileges”, Papandreou, prime minister at that time, insisted in order to justify the austerity measures (Ta Nea daily 2011). A strike in the Athens metro on January 2013 was forcibly ended with the requisition of workers’ service through a ‘civil mobilization order’ (according to a law that has allowed the Greek state on various occasions to break a strike and force people back to work), while the next prime minister, Samaras, once again presented labour interests as sectoral privileges: “Transport belongs to the people that have the right to use it, not to sectoral interests” (Smith 2013).

As a result of those politics of blame, the concept of resistance was instrumentalised by the liberal forces which sought to rapidly implement the austerity programme. While unions that went on at least 20 general strikes within three years were eventually forced to unprecedented concessions in terms of wage cuts and layoffs amidst rampant unemployment, the Troika promoted the shock-therapy under the motto of “resistance against domestic vested interests” (European Commission 2012: 11). And when the movement of the squares tried to prevent the measures with protests, the

government would resort to different, more abstract arguments next to the demonization of trade unions in order to assert again that it is futile for society to resist: “It makes no sense to protest”, prime minister Papandreou, had stated, because “those who protest in city squares are appealing to national democratic systems, which are weak and hostage to global powers and weaknesses of a global system” (Athens News 2011).

Finally, ‘resistance’ was promoted as necessary, not only against ‘selfish’ worker groups, but even against vaguely defined new ‘enemies’, as for instance, global speculators. As a result, the ones who were really in need of resistance, the unemployed, the people in precarious employment situations, the retired, those who saw unprecedented income reductions, and those dependent on welfare provisions, remained astounded and confused about who should be assigned the responsibility for their situation: the government and national elites, or the Troika, the global speculators, or the Eurozone and its faulty architecture. They found themselves deprived of a more comprehensive concept of resistance, capable of penetrating the nexus of the “international financial diplomacy” (Streeck 2011: 1), and of providing new means for the self-protection of society.

## **5. Final remarks**

Polanyi’s work has been criticised – and not only by free-market ideologists such as Rothbard (2004: 1), who saw in *Great Transformation* “a farrago of confusions, absurdities, fallacies, and distorted attacks on the free market”. The idea of the double movement has been characterised as “deeply flawed” (Fraser 2011: 140) for over-focusing on the economy-society tension. For Fraser (*ibid.*), the *Great Transformation* “overlooks harms originating elsewhere, in the surrounding ‘society’ and “tends to whitewash forms of social protection that are at the same time vehicles of domination. Considering that Polanyi “romanticizes society”, Fraser suggests the replacement of the “double movement” by the “triple movement”, which includes a series of antagonisms and struggles for emancipation, not only in the direction of protecting society from economy, but also other struggles within society, expressed for instance by feminism, anti-imperialism etc. (*ibid.*: 155-156). Fraser’s perspective is useful for the analysis of such

struggles, but the concept of the double movement remains a valuable tool to shed light on the complexities of the current Eurozone crisis, the shock-therapies implemented in Greece and elsewhere, and the various forms of resistance that were thus triggered.

However, a problem arises from the fact that Polanyi did not incorporate in his analysis the possibility of more than one wave of marketisation. Polanyi believed that the experience of market liberalism up to the 1930s crisis could not be repeated, as humanity had learned its lesson. According to Block (2008: 38), this is not merely showing “Polanyi’s failure as a prophet”, but also brings to the fore the very question that Polanyi did not pose, i.e. whether “humanity is doomed to endless cycles in which one movement is in the ascendancy followed by the other” (ibid.). The fact that Polanyi did not provide a theory of capitalist transformations and considered “the collapse of the 19th century civilization” as definite, was to be reduced to his relation to Marxism: “in rejecting Marxism, he rejected the very idea of capitalism with its imperatives for accumulation and new sources of profit” (Burawoy 2010: 307) leading to the conception of a single cycle theory: market devastation, counter-movement and regulated decommodification. Nevertheless from the moment this teleology no longer works, the history of capitalism can be seen as a succession of transformations and as a complex and conflictual interweaving of marketisation/liberalisation processes on the one hand, and continuous counter-movements on the other (ibid.).

The case of Greece marks one more liberalisation wave akin to those referred to by Burawoy, set in motion to regain market confidence after the 2008 crisis and manifesting itself through Eurozone’s ‘internal devaluation’ and ‘automatic austerity’ policies. The forms of resistance in Greece, heterogeneous or fragmented though they often are, constitute, in their complexity, facets of the “realistic self-protection of society” and, once again, as in other periods of labour deregulation, add a new link in the long chain of the history of the “universal ‘collectivist’ reaction against the expansion of market economy [...] as conclusive proof or the peril to society inherent in the utopian principle of a self-regulating market” (Polanyi 2001: 157).

The range and speed of the implementation of the austerity measures have had two key outcomes. At the political and electoral level, they directed the societal part of the “double movement” towards what emerged

as a leftwing alternative vis-a-vis the shock therapy, through the remaining democratic/electoral processes within a post-democratic framework in which even elections could ‘upset the markets’. At the social level, new forms of resistance and forces were brought about by a society striving for its ‘self-protection’ through many ways of protesting and showing solidarity amidst a setting of unprecedented social degradation. Overall, the efforts of society’s self-protection are marred by the rise of neo-fascist forces that attempt to distort labour demands, divide working classes and benefit from the social decadence induced by the crisis.

As long as the decision makers of the Eurozone do not change their political orientation towards fiscal discipline, which up to now has been the case, and the failure of the austerity recipe is attributed simply to interests hostile to the market or to forms of behaviour that prevent the reform, while at the same time the financial neoliberalism is left intact, remaining labour and welfare rights in crisis-hit countries are put in great danger. Society, then, has no means to protect itself but resistance, and Polanyi’s critique to the ideology of self-regulating markets can only stand at this society’s side.

- 1 In 2009 these parties polled 83.02% in aggregate, whereas in June 2012 they barely received 43.52% (Hellenic Republic 2012). However, Nea Demokratia’s losses were much smaller than PASOK’s. PASOK, first party with 43.92% in 2009, received in June a mere 12.28% (ibid.), less than its share at its first electoral participation in 1974. PASOK, which had based its 2009 pre-electoral campaign on promises for prosperity, rapidly promoted most of the wage and pensions cuts. It lost a great part of its electoral base, consisting of working class groups, public employees, lower middle classes and others. On the contrary, Nea Demokratia kept the core of its voters, who already had a rightwing, liberal orientation before the crisis.
- 2 The report used the number of “significant actions” to compute the “rate of responsiveness” (to OECD recommendations for reform in job protection, wage formation, taxation and other sectors) and attributed Greece a world record score of 0.917, more than twice the OECD average of 0.430 (OECD 2013: 18-20). Taking into account the varying difficulty of reforms across sectors, Greece was again the first, with 1.563, followed by Spain with 1.491, Portugal with 1.285 and other countries with much less than 1. The increase in “responsiveness rate” with time was computed in a similar manner and Greece once again occupied the highest place (ibid.).

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## Abstracts

This article discusses social resistance to the austerity packages imposed on Greece from 2010 onwards, in the light of Polanyi's concept of the 'double movement'. Two further aspects, noted by Polanyi, are typical of the Greek case: the role of the speed with which specific policies were implemented and the way these policies were justified. Although official data show that Greece has achieved the highest speed of 'structural reforms' worldwide, domestic and international elites that promote austerity policies attribute the programme's downturns to delays in its implementation and to all those who resist the measures (trade unions, citizen groups etc.), who are considered as 'obstacles' to the reform. This way of appealing to such 'obstacles' to explain failures of specific policies is in direct analogy with early liberal views about self-regulating markets, as already described by Polanyi. Finally, it is argued that the heterogeneous and often fragmented forms of resistance that appeared in the course of the Greek crisis constitute instances of what Polanyi characterised as the "realistic self-protection of society" against liberalisation and marketisation.

Der Artikel diskutiert sozialen Widerstand gegen die Griechenland auferlegten Sparpakete seit 2010 aus der Perspektive von Polanyis Konzept der Doppelbewegung (*double movement*). Zwei Aspekte, die bereits von Polanyi beobachtet wurden, sind charakteristisch für den griechischen Fall: die Bedeutung der Geschwindigkeit, mit der spezifische Politiken implementiert wurden, und die Art und Weise, wie diese Politiken gerechtfertigt wurden. Obwohl offizielle Zahlen (OECD 2013) belegen, dass Griechenland ‚Strukturreformen‘ weltweit am schnellsten erreicht hatte, machten jene inländischen und internationalen Eliten, die den Sparkurs propagierten, Verspätungen in der Implementierung und den Widerstand gegen (Spar-)Maßnahmen für das Scheitern des Plans verantwortlich. Widerstand seitens Gewerkschaften oder BürgerInnengruppen wurde als ‚Reformblockade‘ ausgelegt. Diese Art ‚Blockaden‘ als Grund für das Scheitern spezifischer Politiken auszulegen, steht in direkter Analogie zu früheren liberalen Perspektiven auf selbstregulierende Märkte, wie sie von Polanyi bereits beschrieben wurden. Nicht zuletzt argumentiert die Autorin, dass die heterogenen und oft fragmentierten Formen von Widerstand im Zuge der griechischen Krise soziale Umstände produzierten, die Polanyi als charakteristisch für den „realistischen Selbstschutz einer Gesellschaft“ gegen Liberalisierung und Vermarktlichung beschreibt.

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TIINA SEPPÄLÄ

**Biopolitics, Resistance and the Neoliberal  
Development Paradigm<sup>1</sup>**

**1. Introduction**

The study of resistance has become popular in social and political sciences. Recently, concepts such as ‘everyday resistance’ and ‘counter-conduct’ have drawn quite a lot of attention, which is due to the growing popularity of Michel Foucault’s theory of *biopolitics*. Biopolitics refers to a mode of politics located and practised at the level of life, taking populations as its objects while aiming at (re)producing all aspects of social life. As a technique of governance, it controls “unproductive” or “dangerous” population groups by enhancing and fostering “the life of a certain part of the population through disallowing the life of another” (Selmeczi 2012: 25), separating between “what must live and what must die” (Foucault 2003: 255). It involves not only discouraging and uprooting the ways of living deemed unproductive but also efforts to “modernize and enhance” populations groups (Odysseos 2011: 444).

The biopolitical approach has also gained more relevance in development studies. Development is considered the main technology for governing “surplus population”, a population that is “superfluous” to the demands of the market and whose “skills, status or even existence are in excess of prevailing conditions and requirements” (Selmeczi 2012: 45; Duffield 2007: 9, 18). A growing number of scholars argue that instead of helping developing countries, many international development projects are implemented and designed with the unstated, yet explicit aim of securing the dominant system, of keeping it stable (e.g. Chatterjee 2004; Baviskar 2004; Duffield 2007). Due to the pressure to ‘develop’, many developing countries have become indebted to foreign capital, and often social and

political rights in these countries are weakened as a result of Structural Adjustment Programs required by international institutions. While trying to demonstrate to foreign creditors that it can repay its debts, the state has to “play an increasingly repressive role, keeping the working classes in line and preventing social unrest” (Baviskar 2004: 36).

In many developing countries, such as India, national political and economic elites, together with foreign capital, have appropriated natural resources such as land, forests, minerals and water for commercial purposes (Baviskar 2004: 36). Although development projects are justified by referring to the public interest, often they diminish poor people’s possibilities to use natural resources (Baviskar 2004: 32, 36f, 224). The struggle for land lies at the heart of neoliberal development (Roy 2009: xiv). In rural India lands are forcefully grabbed from peasants, many of whom, after losing their livelihoods, are forced to move to metropolitan cities where they end up living either in legal or illegal slums (Mohanty 2010: 245). Displaced people living in slums often also encounter the neoliberal state “in the form of eviction notices or in the form of bulldozer” (Jha 2011: 1, 3). This new form of ghettoisation, or “new urban apartheid”, takes place in the name of development (Jha 2011: 1f; Roy 2009: 122). Indeed, development projects are the main cause of forced migration and internal displacement. While 25 million people are displaced due to conflicts, over 200 million are displaced due to development projects (Jha 2011: 4). India has the largest number of internally displaced people in the world (Basu 2011: 17).

Given the social, political and ethical problems generated by the neoliberal development paradigm, it is not surprising that an increasing number of social movements in developing countries have started to resist it (Mohanty 2010: 239). Often the poor and low caste women, who suffer the most from large-scale development projects, are active in forming movements, many of which “construct identities that often cut across a number of particular identities” (Mohanty 2010: 244, 254). In many places resistance has become ‘feminised’. Alliances between the feminist movement and movements struggling against land grabbing and forced displacement are also increasing (Motta/Nilsen 2011: 16; Mukherjee et al. 2011: 15).

Some movements co-operate with state authorities and political parties while others completely refuse to collaborate with them (Mohanty 2010: 239). In India, the relationship between social movements and the state has



always been ambivalent. The state strongly disciplines and punishes social movements and activists, trying to marginalise them and to represent them as being against progress and reform (Roy 2009: xiv). Direct violence is used regularly – there are countless examples of the police beating, abusing, raping and killing activists (Baviskar 2004; Roy 2009; Mohanty 2010: 242f; Nilsen 2011: 116; Mukherjee et al. 2011: 175; Roy 2012b: 41). Yet, even violent struggles are not simply destructive for movements because they, as Sara Motta and Alf Gunvald Nilsen (2011: 16) point out, simultaneously involve “the construction of new subjectivities and social relationships that reinvent a development beyond developmentalism and against neoliberalism”. This is perhaps why the political and economic elites of the neoliberal state not only resort to coercion but seek to establish ‘clientelistic’ relationships between the elites and subaltern groups in order to “create dependency of the latter upon the former and thus undercut popular mobilization” (Motta/Nilsen 2011: 18f). New kinds of technologies of rule that emphasize “participation and good governance” (Nilsen 2011: 109) are also utilised with the aim of transforming certain population groups into responsible, self-governing subjects.

How can then this kind of biopolitical governance be challenged? In this article, I reflect on this theme drawing on a case study of mine which examines resistance to the *Rajarhat New Town Project* in the city of Kolkata. This is a project which has displaced hundreds of families and deprived local peasants of their lands and livelihoods since the mid-1990s. The material was collected via ethnographic methods during my six month field visit in Kolkata in 2011–12. It consists of in-depth interviews and shorter discussions with 26 activists, peasants, fishermen and villagers involved in local anti-land acquisition and anti-eviction movements. Most in-depth interviews were conducted with female activists who had organised protests and mass mobilisations against the government and helped victims of forceful land acquisition and displacement. Here, my aim is to reflect on different conceptualisations of resistance by discussing the understandings of social movement activists that partly support, and partly challenge, theoretical discourses that have become popular in current development studies.

I start the article by discussing the Foucauldian framework, introducing shortly afterwards the perspective of ‘resistance’ as well as that of ‘counter-conduct’. Thereafter I proceed to critiques that the Foucauldian approach has confronted in post-colonial contexts, especially in South Asia,

and that emphasise the need to develop genuinely movement-relevant theories of resistance. This is followed by an analysis of the case study, concentrating on activist perspectives on autonomous resistance, their views on the political system and co-optation efforts by the state, NGOs and (Western) academics. The paper concludes by discussing the relevance of main findings from a broader theoretical perspective.

## **2. Resistance and counter-conduct**

In Foucault's works, there are two partly overlapping frameworks for addressing the question of how to resist and challenge governance. Firstly, there is the broader framework of 'resistance', an integral part of Foucault's theory of power. Resistance means literally to stand against. As a form of refusal or disobedience, it can be considered reactive by nature, which inevitably invites the question as to what extent it is possible to challenge power relations by following this perspective. Indeed, Foucauldian resistance must be theoretically understood in "its complex and intimate relationship with the art of governing, rather than assuming a simple opposition to it" (Odysseos 2011: 452). Even when resisting, subjects are governed because "dissenting practice itself 'disciplines' the conduct of subjects" (Odysseos 2011: 439f). The risk of power "creeping into" resistance, configuring, disciplining, and normalising it, is thus constantly present (Vinthagen 2009: 171).

Secondly, there is the concept of 'counter-conduct', defined as a "struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others" (Foucault 2007b: 201). More specifically, counter-conduct is about "how not to be governed *like that*, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them" (Foucault 2007a: 44). Counter-conduct does not aim at influencing policies or political institutions – it questions normality, produces and embodies difference, constructs utopias, and creates and experiments with new subjectivities.

Counter-conduct is non-linear, diffuse, diverse, a concept rich in contradictions. One reason why the concept has not gained as much attention as that of resistance is that in taking place as a spontaneous or an everyday form of resistance, counter-conduct is not as spectacular as revo-

lutionary resistance. Counter-conduct seeks to transform the very relations of power by doing things ‘differently’. In the context of biopolitics, where biopower mainly functions through ‘productive’ mechanisms, counter-conduct signifies a refusal to act as a responsible, self-governing subject.

Viewed from a more general or collective perspective, the Foucauldian approach suggests that a “‘daily ethico-political struggle’ ensues to create the conditions in which resistance can emerge in opposition to domination”, and that transformation “requires overcoming disciplinary power rather than accepting its shaping of the subject” (Richmond 2011: 422f, 433). Here, the distinction between ‘population’ and ‘people’ is crucial. The people, Foucault (2007b: 43f) explains, “comprise those who conduct themselves in relation to the management of the population, at the level of population, as if they were not part of the population as a collective subject-object, as if they put themselves out of it, and consequently the people are those who, refusing to be the population, disrupt the system”. Foucault also talks about evading power “by disengagement, by *not* resisting” (Vinthagen 2009: 171). In order to challenge biopolitics, a subject must assume an “attitude of indifference no longer to the threat of power, but to its loving embrace” (Prozorov 2007: III).

Recently, this kind of a “resistant, critical subjectivity” has been discussed in the context of an emerging post-colonial civil society (Richmond 2011: 420). The attention has shifted towards the unorganised, *subaltern* domain of politics, analysing how (biopolitical) governance influences subaltern resistance, and how the subaltern domain could function autonomously (Roy 2012a: 36f; Roy 2012b; Roy/Banerjee 2012). Subaltern mentality is characterised, on the one hand, by submissiveness to authority, and by defiance and resistance, on the other (Bhadra 1997: 63, 95). It is argued that it is fruitful to study resistance in developing countries through the Foucauldian perspective, since it “enables thought-provoking interrogations in post-colonial localities” where liberal, neoliberal and colonial governmentalities exist at the same time (Odysseos 2011: 441).

Many South Asian scholars particularly praise Foucault for rethinking power and helping to realise its transformative aspects (e.g. Giri 2009: xxvii). From the perspective of resistance it is important that, in the Foucauldian framework, subaltern groups “can re-establish human practices and institutions from their own perspective” (Mahadevan 2009: 101). At the same time

Foucault, coming from a continental tradition, is criticised by South Asian academics and activists for his Euro-centrism, elitism, and preoccupation with power (Giri 2009: xxvii). For some, Foucault advocates an atomistic perspective because the choices are “either losing to the other or maintaining permanent struggle” (Mahadevan 2009: 117). Hence, it is necessary to “go beyond the trappings of power and counter-power” (Giri 2009: xxviii).

How is this then to be done? One possibility is to pay more attention to post-colonial theory, where Western political theory is criticised for presuming that all projects of emancipation have to come from within its own worldview (Clammer 2009: 563; Giri 2009: xxx). John Clammer (2009: 573) argues that the concept of resistance “which has become the leitmotiv of much progressive social theory” must be supplemented with the notion of self-realisation, not in its individual but rather in its social and collective form, thus aiming at “mutual co-creation”. In Asian traditions self-cultivation is not considered a personal, egoistic project but a process of “becoming more fully human” in a particular social context, giving priority to ethics and “dialogic modes of being” (Clammer 2009: 573). Asian traditions can be fruitful in helping to overcome “the human, ecological and political impasse” generated by classical Western theory (Clammer 2009: 573). This would mark, as Dipesh Chakrabarty (2008: 46) puts it, a step towards a situation in which “the world may once again be imagined as radically heterogeneous”.

What is also required is a critical examination of the broader context of knowledge production. Many difficulties arise when trying to translate resistance in the global South “into Western-based understanding and theory, or using situated theories to understand practice” (Otto/Terhorst 2011: 216; Mukherjee et al. 2011: 150). Too often research segregates “the knowledge from people, from its contexts and local histories” (D’Souza 2011: 236f), and runs the risk of regarding subalternity as a ‘symptom’ to be ‘cured’ by studying it (Otto/Terhorst 2011: 210). The position of the researcher is, paradoxically, made possible by the existing structural differences, and “depends on a hierarchical relationship between those who can give and those who can only take” (Otto/Terhorst 2011: 207, 210f).

According to Sara Motta (2011: 192), developing movement-relevant theories of resistance demands epistemological and conceptual rethinking in order to subvert academic subjectivity, destabilise academic privilege and transcend the binary opposition between theoretical and practical knowl-

edge. It should be acknowledged that besides practical and situated knowledge, movements also create theoretical knowledge (Motta/Nilsen 2011: 21f). Motta (2011: 194, 196) stresses that theory is not produced individually, but collectively, “via reflection, within political struggle, based upon the lived experiences and struggles of excluded and marginalized communities”. In this view, theory is “an open instrument, derived from and by social movements” in their efforts to create emancipatory subjectivities (Motta 2011: 196). By unlearning academic privileges, researchers can widen their understanding of movement-relevant research, learn from the practices of social movements, and reorient their own practices in a way that allows epistemology to become “a prefigurative practice of everyday life” (Motta 2011: 182, 196).

Next, I will take a small step towards this direction by discussing, on the basis of my case study, social movement activists’ views concerning their resistance in relation to neoliberal development, the political system and various co-optation efforts. Through this reflection, I seek to bring forward issues that the movements and activists that I have studied consider important, or problematic, when conceptualising resistance from their perspective.

### **3. Resisting neoliberal development in Kolkata**

A home for 15 million people, Kolkata is the capital of the fourth biggest province of India, West Bengal. One of the most controversial urban development projects in Kolkata has been the *Rajarhat New Town Project*. It started in the mid-1990s but became an object of wide public debate only in 2006 during the heated election campaign. Rajarhat used to be a vital agricultural area, providing livelihood for hundreds of families. After the project started, most farmers were compelled, duped or forced into selling their lands at very low prices. Later, when the lands were used for commercial and industrial purposes, land prices skyrocketed. By buying land cheap from the farmers and selling it to the private developers at a higher price, the West Bengal government made a good profit (Banerjee 2012: 180).

There had not been proper plans made for the rehabilitation of displaced people who lost their lands. In addition to farmers, many fishermen lost their livelihood as huge water bodies were also included in the



project. Many of them now collect, sort and sell garbage for their living. Some women have been forced to engage in prostitution. People in Rajarhat are frustrated, because they had been promised that the construction of a new township would create industry and employment in the area. Now, these promises are considered lies. Instead of building luxurious shopping malls and residential complexes for those who are already well-off, they stress that development projects should benefit the vast majority of people, the poor, who need basic things: work, food, fresh water, schools and hospitals (Interviews 4, 5).

The *Rajarhat New Town Project* has resulted in very critical views of development among the affected people and activists, who believe that it is explicitly designed for the elites and the middle-class at the expense of lower classes. From the perspective of governance, the middle-class and elites must be kept separate from the struggles of peasants. This is accomplished by actively distancing these population groups from each other with different techniques of governance, both physical and non-physical. In Foucauldian terms, it is a form of racism whereby biopower governs population “through introducing a fragmentation into the mass of governed, thus allowing the modern state to foster the life of a certain part of the population through disallowing the life of another” (Selmeczi 2012: 25; Foucault 2003: 79-84). In the words of an activist: “What kind of development [the] government wants? [They] are killing farmers and developing some buildings for rich men” (Interview 5).

The Rajarhat peasants have lost much of their independence due to the loss of their lands and livelihoods, but some of them defy the state by refusing to move off their lands, and by continuing to cultivate they also try to remain autonomous from the state and its ‘care’. This population is not unproblematic from the perspective of governance – it resists and fights back, by declining to act as expected. While governance utilises both the methods of governmentality and suppression, and sometimes ‘co-opts’ the resistance of subalterns, also the subalterns “learn to reciprocate to both the methods by corresponding techniques” (Roy 2012a: 36; 2012b: 55).

These developments are closely related to the ever-growing skepticism towards the political system and political parties. A process of de-politicisation and growing antipathy towards mainstream politics has taken place in West Bengal (Roy 2012b: 60), which is not surprising given that all

political parties support neoliberal development (Roy 2009: 38). Instead of benefiting the poor, neoliberal development serves “the rising demands of the new aristocracy” (Roy 2009: xiv), and has become “an essential governmental tool in the hands of the contemporary Indian rulers” (Banerjee/Roy 2012: 130). For the activists, neoliberalism represents a global ideology of free trade, privatisation and deregulation that aims to reduce government control of the economy but has, paradoxically, resulted in the Indian state becoming increasingly more controlled and managed by external, global forces. Consequently, from the perspective of the distribution of wealth and resources within the country, this has meant that neoliberalism has become a method of “grabbing all the resources” and “having ownership in the hands of few” (Interview 4). Hence, it is no wonder that movements are becoming more radical in their demands. Some consider a full-scale revolution with a fundamental reconstruction of society as the only alternative at a time when neoliberalism has provided development “a new source of political legitimacy” (Mohanty 2010: 247).

The idea of autonomous resistance has become increasingly popular among farmers, low caste people and the urban poor. They believe that problems generated by neoliberal development must be solved by struggle in the streets, villages, and forests. In line with the Foucauldian concept of counter-conduct, activists emphasise the significance of independent forms of political engagement, instead of merely resisting the government, or allying with political parties. They believe that social movements can allow people to create new forms of participation, and make up new rules and alternatives on their own, a process which enables transformative practices. Local organisation and autonomous decision-making are emphasised as essential forms of people’s democracy (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 5).

While a growing number of people are leaving the existing political groups, including those on the established left, the ‘traditional’ civil society approach is also considered inadequate. As NGOs are based on humanitarianism, they are not believed to challenge the logic of development but rather to act as ‘safety guards’ of the neoliberal system and state power. (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 6) Indeed, some South Asian scholars who consider the ‘NGOisation’ of civil society a process of de-politicisation which makes developing countries “dependent on aid and handouts” (Roy 2009: 41), emphasise the need to pay special attention to “new global technologies

of governmentality that claim to ensure that the benefits of development are spread more evenly and that the poor [...] do not become its victims” (Chatterjee 2004: 67f).

Many activists stress that *the politics of development* should be brought into the forefront. Yet, there are also more ‘traditional’ views concerning political organisation and political power: some activists believe that movements “cannot shy away from taking power” because “to be able to make changes you need political power” (Interview 2). Theoretically, the extent to which social movements can advance their oppositional projects through established forms of political engagement is a source of extensive debate. Some argue that by not engaging with state power, movements give up the possibility of a “counter-hegemonic contestation of neoliberalism”, which can only be accomplished by “popular forces taking state power *and* transforming the state in the process” (Boden 2011: 90, 95). Some others assert that there are “structural limits to how far popular emancipation can advance via the capitalist state”, and advocate radical counter-hegemonic projects that challenge “the social foundations of state power as such” (Motta/Nilsen 2011: 21; Nilsen 2011: 110, 121).

The same divide applies among the activists in Kolkata – they often have mixed views concerning the two domains of politics, the autonomous domain of subaltern politics and the state-led, elite-controlled organised politics. The struggles taking place in West Bengal indicate that there is both increasing interaction and conflict between the domains (Roy 2012b: 63). While some argue that it is impossible for movements to have any autonomy (Roy/Banerjee 2012: 87), others maintain that the distinction between the organised and the unorganised domains of politics should not be overly polarised (Roy 2012c: 157), since movements can adopt “multiple strategies in relation to the state according to the nature of conflict in which subaltern groups are embroiled” (Nilsen 2011: 105). It is unfortunate that these two last points have not gained enough attention in the biopolitical approach, although Foucault (2000: 455f) himself argues that “[w]orking with a government doesn’t imply either a subjection or a blanket acceptance. One can work and be intransigent at the same time. I would even say that the two things go together.”

In this context, it must be stressed that many activists criticise (Western) academics in very straightforward terms for maintaining that they “know better than the people”, and for representing their views as

“the voice of the people” (Interview 4). Some argue that Western feminists, in particular, have a problematic tendency to conceptualise not only oppression but also women’s resistance from their own particular, Eurocentric perspective (Interviews 3, 4, 6). It is always a major challenge for social movements to fight government repression and co-optation efforts (Sitrin 2011: 270), but having to struggle against science, too, can become very arduous. Another source of critique is that social movement scholars coming from the global North tend to be more interested in advancing their own academic careers than collaborating or becoming partners with social movements (Interview 5), and that, while criticising neoliberal development, many academics themselves enjoy “all the benefits of modernity” (Interview 3). Hence, increasingly often the importance of refusing privileges and living an ‘activist life’ is stressed, not only by the activists but in the theoretical debate as well: “Because to be and not merely to know is the real thing [...] all revolution and paradigmatic departures should be accompanied by a personal revolution also” (Das 2009: 582).

#### **4. Concluding remarks**

In this paper I have reflected on biopolitics, governance, neoliberal development and different conceptualisations of resistance and counter-conduct from the Foucauldian perspective. I have also discussed some critiques that the Foucauldian approach has encountered in post-colonial contexts, especially in South Asia, emphasising the need to develop genuinely movement-relevant theories of resistance. I have reflected on these topics by drawing on my empirical case study in Kolkata, showing that social movements not only resist and oppose, but aim at transforming existing power relations by ‘not engaging’, as well as by actively creating new practices. By refusing to act as ‘good liberal citizens’, activists seek to challenge normalising practices and also constitute new kinds of subjectivities. Transformed power relations simultaneously both restrict and enable certain practices and subject positions. Since counter-conduct is always linked to the power that conducts, viewed from the Foucauldian perspective, movements can never be fully external to the forces and power relations they seek to counter.

When theorising resistance, it is important to note that movements may not only consider co-optation efforts by the neoliberal state a threat: the role of (Western) academics is also criticised. If we are to take this critique seriously – and we should, because we know that power co-opts knowledge – the foundations of Western political theory and traditional social movement research must be critically evaluated. Not only the dichotomy between power and resistance, oppressor and oppressed but also that of theory and practice needs to be challenged. In this task the Foucauldian perspective, although often rightfully criticised for theoreticism, elitism and Eurocentrism, can prove to be helpful as it always compels us to think beyond binaries.

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### **List of interviews**

- Interview 1: Kolkata, 14 January 2012. Activist, politically uncommitted, university teacher, male.
- Interview 2: Kolkata, 8 February 2012. Activist, politically uncommitted, university teacher, male.
- Interview 3: Kolkata, 1 March 2012. Activist, politically uncommitted, documentarist, male.
- Interview 4: Kolkata, 17 March 2012. Activist, engaged in a political party, student, female.
- Interview 5: Kolkata, 18 March 2012. Activist, politically uncommitted, secretary, male.
- Interview 6: Kolkata, 26 March 2012. Activist, trade union leader, female.
- Interview 7: Kolkata, 27 March 2012. Activist, university researcher, female.

### **Abstracts**

The Foucauldian approach of biopolitics has become popular in current development studies because it is considered fruitful for studying resistance, especially in developing countries. Studying social movements in post-colonial localities through the Foucauldian perspective, it is argued, makes it possible to conceptualise new kinds of resistant, critical subjectivities capable of challenging the dominant, neoliberal development paradigm. Although a valid argument from the perspective of theoretical discussion, viewed from the grassroots level it can be criticised for theo-

reticism and elitism, qualities that, as pointed out in postcolonial theory, characterise much of the Eurocentric social movement research. This article reflects on these themes by drawing on an empirical case study that explores resistance to neoliberal development in Kolkata, India, introducing also some critiques that the Foucauldian approach has encountered. Based on critiques presented by both South Asian scholars and social movement activists, the article highlights problems in Western theory and knowledge production, while discussing the possibility of crafting genuinely movement-relevant theories of resistance that transcend the separation between theory and practice.

Der Foucaultsche Ansatz zu Biopolitiken erfreut sich heute zunehmender Beliebtheit in der Entwicklungsforschung, weil er für die Widerstandsanalyse (insbesondere in Entwicklungsländern) als besonders ergiebig angesehen wird. Es wird argumentiert, dass die Untersuchung sozialer Bewegungen in postkolonialen Kontexten mittels einer Foucaultschen Perspektive die Konzeptualisierung neuer Formen von Widerstand und kritischer Subjektivitäten ermöglicht, die imstande sind, das dominante, neoliberale Entwicklungsparadigma herauszufordern. Auf der „Grassroots“-Ebene wurde hingegen berechtigte Kritik geübt hinsichtlich einer „Übertheoretisierung“ und einem Elitismus in der eurozentrischen Forschung über soziale Bewegungen – eine Kritik, die auch von Seiten postkolonialer Theoretiker\_innen geteilt wird. Der Artikel reflektiert solche kritischen Auseinandersetzungen mit dem Foucaultschen Zugang anhand eines empirischen Fallbeispiels, in dem der Widerstand gegen neoliberale Entwicklung in Kolkata (Indien) untersucht wird. Auf der Basis kritischer Interventionen seitens südasiatischer Wissenschaftler\_innen und Aktivist\_innen, die in sozialen Bewegungen aktiv sind, beleuchtet der Artikel Probleme in der westlichen Theorie- und Wissensproduktion und diskutiert zugleich die Möglichkeit einer genuin bewegungsrelevanten Widerstandstheorie, welche die Grenzen zwischen Theorie und Praxis überwindet.

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**Corinne Kumar (ed.): Asking, We Walk. The South as New Political Imaginary** (4 volumes). Bangalore: Streelekha 2011 (vol 1-2, second ed.), 2012 (vol 3), 2013 (vol 4), 2176 pages, 120.00/300.00 USD ([www.eltaller.in](http://www.eltaller.in)).

How to solve today's multiple financial, economic, environmental as well as societal, political and (one may add), spiritual crises? What are the alternatives and how should they look? The four volumes of *Asking, We Walk* offer an impressive overview of this (re)search. The Indian editor, Corinne Kumar, is Secretary General of the Tunis-based international NGO El Taller and a founding member of the Asian Women's Human Rights Council and the World Courts of Women. And as the sociologist is also "sometimes [a] poet and always [a] pilgrim of life", the anthology is a lively mix of scientific papers, statements, testimonies and poetry. It is impossible to summarise all the analyses, experiences, ideas and hopes that are expressed by the authors from 49 countries and from every continent – amongst them well-known names such as Ivan Illich, Vandana

Shiva, Gustavo Esteva, Samir Amin, Noam Chomsky, Eduardo Galeano, and Subcomandante Marcos, the leader of the Mexican Zapatistas.

*Asking, we walk* presents a wide variety of critical thinking on current mainstream paradigms which are seen to be rooted in the Western Enlightenment which provided the background for the civilising mission of colonialism. And "decolonization was also a process of conversion: the worldwide acceptance of the Western self-image of homo economicus [...], with all needs commodity-defined. Scarcely twenty years were enough to make two billion people define themselves as underdeveloped", as Ivan Illich wrote as early as in 1980 in an article reprinted in the anthology. Not only the liberal concept of democracy, but also the current human rights discourse, which recognises the rights of individuals but not communities, is said to be based upon that thinking. Several other authors warn us to be cautious in using words such as 'democracy', 'progress', 'security', 'identity', 'traditional', '(under) development' or 'stakeholders'.



In the search for alternatives, new forms of democracy and politics that are “infused with the ethical” are sought, and older concepts such as Gandhi’s Satyagraha (journey of truth) or Nyerere’s Ujamaa reinterpreted. Feminist analysis and Courts of Women, Truth and Reconciliation Committees or tribunals could provide justice and healing, so as “not [to] allow [the past] to imprison us” (Desmond Tutu). A wide range of social movements, such as Occupy, the Senegalese Y’en a Marre and the World Social Forums, are presented, but one would have hoped to find more reflections about the Arab Spring.

The anthology is dedicated to the Zapatistas and its title refers to one of the central Zapatista principles: we walk forward not by telling people what to do, but by asking them what they are doing and what should be done. This includes also some sort of healthy self-criticism. The philosophy of the Zapatistas seems to mirror some major lines of this anthology: against an all-encompassing market logic, hierarchies, the nation-state in its current form and hollow forms of democracy – and instead emphasising dignity, plurality and a horizontal approach in decision making.

Corinne Kumar takes us on a journey, inviting us to “a deeper civilizational dialogue”. But how can these different visions for a more just, peaceful and equitable world take effect in broader society, around the globe? Who will support and enforce a “New Social Contract”? Neither the Zapatistas nor social movements really challenged existing power relations – partly because they do not want to exchange one system of dominance against another one. After the disasters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this is indeed good news.

It may take a long time to move to more diverse, just and equitable societies. If we ever get there. Yet, as Gustavo Esteva writes in his “Celebration of Zapatismo”: “Hope is the very essence of popular movements” and (citing Vaclav Havel), “[this hope is not] the conviction that something will happen, but that something makes sense, whatever happens.”

MARTINA NEUWIRTH

**Maria Eriksson Baaz, Maria Stern: Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War? Perceptions, Prescriptions, Problems in the Congo and Beyond.** London: Zed Books 2013, 168 pages, £21,99.

The question mark in the book title *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War?* is more significant than the casual reader might first suspect. It would not be the first time that question marks are employed to make a straightforward book title sound more provocative, more interesting, more captivating. However, the question mark in the title of Eriksson Baaz's and Stern's book does not stand for such a marketing tool, but in fact forms the prelude for a thorough interrogation, and a serious questioning of the now prevalent frame of 'sexual violence as a weapon of war'.

Drawing on feminist and post-colonial theory as well as on military sociology, the authors' rather courageous aim is to expose the ways in which the dominant explanatory framework of 'sexual violence as a weapon of war' has had the (side) effect of silencing both other narratives of victims and perpetrators and alternative explanations for the occurrence of such violence. In order to do that, they unpack the

story of 'rape as a weapon of war' through discourse analysis, first by tracing its predecessor, The 'Sexed' Story (chapter 1) and subsequently by studying its seductive nature (chapter 2). The 'Sexed' Story, as the authors term it, is the explanatory framework that casts rape as an unfortunate byproduct of war, as the logical outcome of men's biological urges in the absence of social constraints. This deterministic and essentialising frame became replaced by the 'Gendered' Story that highlights the ways in which militarised masculinity is produced through gender based violence and rape becomes a means with which to humiliate the enemy.

While the authors do not dispute the merit of the 'Gendered' Story, they are rather interested in what this shift "might inadvertently *do* to our understandings of the subjects produced through the available lexicons of sex-gender-violence" (p.21). This question might sound rather abstract, especially to those less familiar with or sympathetic to discourse analytical approaches – while readers interested in discourse analysis might, in contrast, have wanted more details concerning the authors' sources and method. However, Eriksson Baaz and Stern introduce much of their reflections

against the background of their field work in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), in which, among other things, they conducted focus group interviews with members of the Congolese military. Their questions therefore become much more than a mere theoretical exercise, but evidently and explicitly arise from their own struggles to make sense of these interview encounters within the limited/limiting frame of 'rape as a weapon of war'. They show how the 'Gendered' Story relies on racialised depictions of Congolese men, but also how it leaves out some, what they term, 'uncomfortable subjects' (p.32), such as other types of violence occurring in war time, men/boys as victims and girls/women as perpetrators, as well as the stories of perpetrators of sexual violence (can they be human and suffering as well?), which do not neatly fit this explanatory frame. Similarly, the authors present in the subsequent chapters, how the storyline of 'rape as a weapon of war', while appealing in its promise for change with its clear notions of culpability, is not as stable and cohesive as it seems (chapter 2) and that its main ingredients, such as the strategic nature of violence, cannot stand the empirical test of the messiness of war (chapter 3).

The final substantive chapter of the book, entitled "Post-Coloniality, victimcy and humanitarian engagement: being a good global feminist?", is arguably the most engaging chapter for those interested more broadly in dilemmas of humanitarian intervention, rather than sexual violence per se, as it describes and analyses the impact of the much publicised narrow focus on sexual violence in the DRC; how the DRC became the perfect site to act out Western benevolence, how rape survivors' narratives are selectively listened to while ignoring their accounts of other violence, how NGOs resort to 'victim appropriation' in their competition for funding, and how substantial earmarked funding for sexual violence results both in lack of money for other (gender equality) work as well as in women feeling compelled to present themselves as rape victims in order to access basic health care services. This chapter explicitly raises dilemmas for NGOs and humanitarian workers and is thereby an important extension to chapter 2, in which NGOs and UN organisations, such as Amnesty International and UN Action, feature as significant co-creators of the 'rape as a weapon of war' narrative. Moreover, it extends the initial

'unease', which formed the impetus of the book, that the authors experienced in both wrestling with and being seduced by perpetrator and victim stories, to further reflections on their own struggles and complexities as academics and feminists. Importantly, they explore the consequences of exposing the 'commercialisation of rape' as well as, more generally, the gaps in the 'rape as a weapon of war' story, which is commonly viewed as a significant achievement of feminist academics, activists and policy makers. Also, they ask themselves the question as to whether the victim of sexual violence would prefer the ethnocentric rescuer over the self-righteous post-colonial critic. Encouraged by Gayatri Spivak's assertion that one "must engage in 'a persistent critique of what one cannot not want'" (p.113), or in their own words the claim that "critical analysis of [...] deeply cherished concepts and victories is sorely needed" (p.113), the authors have decided to tread on this highly contentious terrain. While their steps are careful, they are more steadfast than the rather imprecise subtitle of the book, *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War? Perceptions, Prescriptions, Problems in the Congo and Beyond*, would suggest. More importantly, the

authors have provided the reader with a highly innovative, thought-provoking, but also daring and honest book.

SARA DE JONG

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## **Die letzten Ausgaben**

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- 4/09 25 Jahre Journal für Entwicklungspolitik / 25 Years Journal of Development Studies
- 1/10 Lateinamerikanische Kräfteverhältnisse im Wandel / Changing Power Relations in Latin America
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- 3/10 EntwicklungsexpertInnen / Development Experts
- 4/10 The Nature of Development Studies / Natur und Entwicklungsforschung
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