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The Financialization of the Globe and Subaltern Women in the Third World

What a Postcolonial-Feminist Perspective Can Teach Us about Recent Globalization Processes

In my paper I will argue that contemporary globalization can be better understood if we broaden our perspective and analyze contemporary developments from a postcolonial-feminist perspective.¹ Thus I show (1.) that if we grasp the notion of abstraction in Marx's writing, it is possible to see that we need not put an end to the commodification of labor-power. Instead, if we value abstraction, we can recognize that new social movements in developing countries are at the heart of struggles about the socialist use of capital. Moreover I will claim (2.) that by recognizing the abstract nature of finance capital – the recent dominant force of globalization – we can also understand that finance capital as coded through world trade depends upon land and the embodied female subject. It is reproductive rights, biopiracy, population control that allow finance capital to work. Thus it is the rural scene that is the real global front today. My article describes (3.) how non-Eurocentric ecological movements and networks opposed to reproductive and genetic engineering are paradigms for political agency in the present day which try to turn the lever of capital around for the sake of those who have lost during globalization. Finally, (4.) I will deconstruct the binary between capitalism and socialism and suggest that socialism is not a utopia but a constant pushing away of capitalist productivity for the sake of a socialist redistribution. And this notion is integral for new globe-girdling movements from the global South struggling against dominant forms of globalization.

¹ The term subaltern, introduced by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, is used here to describe people or groups who are out of touch with the possibilities of social upward mobility. The meaning of subaltern transgresses the Marxist focus on class and includes other lines of exploitation, dominance and power, that relate for i. e. to farmers, zero workers, bonded labor. The most useful definition from Spivak is „Subalternity is the name I borrow for the space out of any serious touch with the logics of capitalism or socialism [...]. Please do not confuse it with unorganized labor, women as such, the proletariat, the colonized, the object of ethnography, migrant labor, political refugees, etc.“ (Spivak 1993, 115)

1. Introduction

In the recent financial and economic crises, numerous theorists on the Left have analyzed the historical and structural causes for this situation. Marxist theorists of various kinds have written about the speculative motif of finance capital and the immense power of banks, insurance companies, hedge funds and other shadow banking institutions for many national economies and most of the world's population.² Despite the important and politically valuable insights, the debate is, from a postcolonial perspective, missing at least three crucial points: first, the analyses and suggestions are mostly focused on Europe (and sometimes North America) and rarely relate to the rest of the world. Except for a few investigations on gender-specific effects of the crises, the majority of the literature treats globalization and financial capital as a gender-neutral subject and does not even ask if there are different consequences for (different) men and women.³ And, last but not least, a great part of this critical work restricts itself to examination and is not willing or able to conceptualize resistance or a new model for another future. And the latter is not meant as a kind of reproach, because I am aware of the objections to utopian or messianic elements in leftist thinking. Nevertheless I am convinced that leftist politics should not always shy away from visions of a more just future.

Starting from this diagnosis of the current state of leftist theorizing in Europe, I want to bring in a postcolonial-feminist perspective in order to widen the recent discussions – with which I clearly sympathize. As postcolonial studies have shown, if we truly want to understand globalization, we have to give up our narrow view focused on Europe as well as North-America and integrate Africa, Asia, and South America into our global view. Moreover, it is not sufficient to think about globalization processes without gender. An extensive literature of feminist works has shown that globalization relies on a connection between capitalist ways of production and gender relations, be it in developed countries like Germany, in emerging countries like India or Brazil, or in the least developed countries like Bangladesh or Vietnam.⁴

If we assume that Marx's insights about the logical operations of capital are helpful for a better understanding of the recent developments called globalization, we have to turn to his writings and reread them – incorporating the lessons we have learned from feminist and postcolonial studies. Thus I want to develop in my article a subaltern epistemological point of view that analyzes globalization from the perspective of poor rural women in the Third World. Far from taking this perspective as a *per se* revolutionary standpoint, I want to use the life conditions, subjectivities, and political fights of poor women from the global South as a framework to counter the dominant narratives of Marxism. Theoretically speaking my enterprise is a deconstructive one and thus shares a critical intimacy with what it criticizes. With my article I want to show that by inclu-

² See for example the concise book of the German Marxist economist Huffschmid (2002) and Zeise (2010).

³ Two important exceptions to that trend are Young/Bakker/Elson (2011) and Young/Schuberth (2010).

⁴ See among others Bakker/Runyan/Marchand (2011), Elson (2002) Elson/Cagatay (2000), Bala-krishnan (2001), Beneria (2003) and Perrons (2004).

ding a postcolonial-feminist perspective, globalization and contemporary political fights against it can be understood more thoroughly. Moreover, it is possible to deconstruct the ‚epistemic violence‘ of a theorizing that takes neither colonialism and imperialism nor the constitutive linkage between the Third and the First World into account – even in such emancipatory projects as Marxism.

2. The Shortcomings of Marxism from a Postcolonial-Feminist Perspective: The Meaning of Abstraction

If we consider the history of Marxism in the USA and in some parts of Europe, we receive a certain vulgarized or trivialized picture of what value is and how Marx’s perceptions of labor-power can be used to establish a socialist society: based on the editorial notes from Engels, it seems that labor-power can be analyzed easily and then used for a political praxis. This is in particular visible when we turn to the examination of use-value and exchange-value. If you read Marx’s central thoughts about them in the chapter on commodities in *Capital, Vol. I*, there seems to be an intuitive insight in the difference between use-value and exchange-value. Nevertheless, if we want to understand the Marxist notion of exploitation correctly, we will see that both are in the same form – the value-form – and thus are also constituted by sameness. And whereas it is usually thought that only exchange-value is abstract in contrast to a concrete use-value, Spivak points out that to bring something into the value form means to abstract. In other words: there is abstraction in exchange-value and in use-value as well.

And why is there such an emphasis on abstraction? Spivak reminds us that we have to keep in mind two counterintuitive lessons if we are to understand recent globalization processes and if we are to aim for a socialist future worldwide. First lesson to be learned: use- and exchange-value are two different appearances but still in the same form, namely the value form. This point is important because many Marxist followers have established a binary between use- and exchange-value. This ‚mechanical separation‘ attributes abstraction only to exchange-value and assumes that abstraction causes a great deal of evil (i. e. alienation).⁵ In contrast to that, use-value is considered to be concrete and good. Spivak stresses that there is abstraction in every value form. Although we don’t see the abstraction within use-value immediately, we have to keep in mind that Marx wrote on the second page in *Capital, Vol. I*: „What makes a thing a use-value is the abstract human labor incorporated in it.“ (Marx 1867, 28) Putting something into the value-form always means abstracting – whether it is use- or exchange-value. In his time Marx tried to use the value form as a possibility to explain abstraction in general. But it was already at that time a counter-intuitive lesson. With that in mind, we are able to grasp Marx’s magisterial thought that use-value – normally a fiction – is not a fiction for capital, because capital consumes through measuring. The crucial element of the capi-

⁵ For further examinations of the ‚mechanical separation‘ (mechanisches Auseinander) between use-value and exchange-value in a great deal of Marx’s reviews see the entry on use-value in: *Historisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus* (1999, Bd. 4, 1259 ff.)

talist production is thus the *use of use-value of labor*, not the use of labor. But this idea has been overlooked in many approaches today.

And this first lesson, which needs to be updated in our era of finance capitalism, must be complemented by another one. The second lesson goes like this: the „capitalist pays back less value (in the money-form) that s/he borrowed (in the labor-power form). This is because when labor-power is used, it produces more value than its concrete pre-measurable base requires to reproduce itself potentially as measurable into use-value for capital: labor-power.“ (Spivak 2000, 2) This is exactly labor-power. And it is especially important for socialism to come to understand the role of abstraction, because a socialism that understands this will keep the use of labor-power and being just in its consequences by securing the surplus and/or interest for redistribution.

In order to understand Spivak’s argument about socialism it is essential to understand abstraction. In contrast to many Marxist thinkers she claims that commodification of labor-power is a potentially good thing, because only commodification can provide the wherewithal for a socialist society. To place use (concrete) above exchange (abstract) is in her eyes too much of a Luddite binary to do justice to Marx’s theoretico-practical project. Thus if political goals about ownership of the means of production, dictatorship of the proletariat, and critique of reification remain within the hierarchy of use and exchange, the self-determination of capital as globalization cannot adequately be theorized. For capital is now the big movement of abstraction.

To see what Marx wrote about abstraction, we have to turn to the first chapter in *Capital, Vol. I*, where he says the following:

„Therefore, the common substance that manifests itself in the exchange value of commodities, whenever they are exchanged, is their value. The progress of our investigation will show that exchange value is the only form in which the value of commodities can manifest itself or be expressed. For the present, however, we have to consider the nature of value independently of this, its form. A use value, or useful article, therefore, has value only because human labour in the abstract has been embodied or materialized in it.“ (Marx 1867, 27 f.)

Referencing that passage Spivak stresses that value is not easy to recognize in the use-form, because we are not participating in an exchange. But this is exactly the exciting point in Marx’s work. If we are not able to understand that there is abstraction in exchange-value *and* in use-value, we won’t be able to understand the relation between capital and worker. And the commodity will remain a fetish. Thus Spivak demands: „it is the role of the abstract – the spectral if you will – that we must grasp rather than reject.“ (Spivak 2000, 3) And for socialism we have to think about the same model: it is useful to continue abstracting labor-power, but instead of using it for capitalist accumulation, commodified labor-power can be used from the associated workers for socialism and thus install another mode of redistribution.

Spivak’s re-reading of Marx with its particular focus on abstraction also enables another point of view on the recent dominance of finance capital. For there is no doubt that since 1989 triumphant capitalism has turned to globalization, that is to „nearly complete abstraction, finance capital“ (Spivak 2000, 7). What is meant by that? After the fall of

the Berlin Wall 1989 and the dismantling of the Soviet Union in 1991, the growth of telecommunication established a kind of electronic capital that was unimaginable before. Nowadays the World Bank and other financial institutions are conceptualizing the world as different investment zones, stretching around the whole globe with different latitudes and longitudes and trying to establish one exchange system worldwide. And it is no longer money but data that represents the new universal equivalent. Against the common perspective that finance capital just functions by speculation in the monetary sphere and is something bad, Spivak asserts that „finance capital is the abstract as such and world trade codes it“ (Spivak 2000, 7). And this relation cannot operate without the global South, because it is the rural, the aboriginal, the ecological that is needed and confronted directly by the agencies of globalization.

Before we take a closer look at how finance capital confronts the rural scene through world trade, I want to emphasize again that Spivak regards abstraction as useful. For if we think of capitalism and socialism as each other's *différance*, it is possible to turn to ethical practices that are ‚defective for capitalism‘. In Spivak's words: „Marx must be turned around to those who lost in the capitalist competition again and again; in order to turn this ferociously powerful form of capital around.“ (Spivak 2000, 7)

3. Metropolis and the New Front: The Rural/Indigenous

As we have seen in the preceding elaborations, the question of agency was crucial for Marx and is relevant for contemporary discussions about globalization as well. Following the protocols of Marx's thoughts, we see a movement from speculations about the subject of labor in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* to the definition of the agent of production in the three volumes of *Capital*. And in *Capital* Marx is clear about the worker. As Spivak has diagnosed: he is the agent who „will turn the lever, as commodified labor, of political economy, to veer capital into *pharmakon*, a medicine always ready to turn poisonous if the socialist dose falls short“ (Spivak 2000, 12). Writing at the beginning of industrial capitalism and with the intention to make the worker understand that he is the *agent* of production, Marx's entire thinking is concentrated on factories. This is nowhere more evident than in the famous sequence about the visible and the hidden world of production where the worker and the capitalist meet:

„Accompanied by Mr. Moneybags and by the possessor of labour-power, we therefore take leave for a time of this noisy sphere, where everything takes place on the surface and in view of all men, and follow them both into the hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there stares us in the face – No admittance except on business. Here we shall see, not only how capital produces, but how capital is produced. We shall at last force the secret of profit making.“ (Marx 1867, 121)

In order to demonstrate to the European worker that he is the agent of production and that his agency is validated by the accumulation of capital, Marx relies on an urbanist teleology of history, because the workshop of the worker is the factory, and factories are located in cities. According to the Marxist narrative about the transformation of feuda-

lism into capitalism, the former feudal farmer gets separated from the land and has to sell his labor-power in the factory as a worker. Once again, this Marxian thinking embedded in the rise of industrial capitalism is not a weakness. Quite the contrary, Spivak states that „Marx *must* derive the agent through factory work“ (Spivak 2000, 20 f.). If agency is validated action, this action will for Marx come only from industrial capitalism. If we look around today we can see that the factory has changed, from its decline to the pulverization of the workplace. Yet the urbanist teleology is still alive for a great deal of Marxist followers who locate the global front in mostly western cities.⁶ But if we take Spivak’s thinking about the spectralization of the rural seriously, we have to ask what Marx claimed about land-related agency in opposition to labor-power. In the beginning of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx writes lines which make it obvious that the story of land-related agency has yet to be told:

„Thus only for the workers is the separation of capital, landed property, and labour an inevitable, essential and detrimental separation. Capital and landed property need not remain fixed in this abstraction, as must the labor of the workers.

The separation of capital, rent, and labor is thus fatal for the worker.“ (Marx 1844, 3)

When we look closely at these passages, we can see that the third sentence is separated and italicized in the *Manuscripts*. And thus Spivak suggests an alternative reading concerning Marx’s teleology of land and labor. From a postcolonial viewpoint it is crucial to ascertain that the nation form of appearance is dismissed quite early in Marx’s writing. This tendency can also be found in many approaches of Western Marxists. Why is there a tendency to leave out the nation form? Spivak suggests that there is a link between the separation of land and labor and the disappearance of the nation.

When Marx started to read Adam Smith in the *Manuscripts*, it is with Nationalökonomie (‘national economy’)⁷ that he dealt; in 1867, when *Capital, Vol. I*, was published, it is *political* economy. The first sentence in *Capital, Vol. I*—“the wealth of societies

⁶ See for example the dominant narration about the Anti-/Alter-Globalization movements within Western leftist communities, which – so the story goes – started with Seattle in 1999, whereas when we broaden our perspective to a truly global view the Chipko-Movement in India against the cutting of trees was already beginning in the mid-1970 and can be seen as pioneering the struggles against dominant financialization of the globe long before Western activists initiated actions. Much has been written about the Chipko movement in India written by ecofeminist Vandana Shiva. In the mid-1970’s, India forests were being cut down and replaced by commercial eucalyptus and pine forests, destroying women’s ability to provide for their families. In response women protested by hugging trees and managed to influence the government to initiate a moratorium on tree-felling. This in turn gave rise to interest in preventing soil erosion and loss of biodiversity in indigenous forests. The movement was linked and in some cases supported by organisations started by Gandhi. See Mellor (1997).

⁷ But Marx in his time couldn’t see the increasing relevance of and finance capital. For him the agent of production must be derived from factory work, because the affirmation of the agency of the European subject could only come through industrial capitalism. Thus he writes in the *Manuscripts*: „All wealth has become industrial wealth, wealth of labor, and industry is fully

where the capitalist production prevails“—makes this move evident. The *Grundrisse* established the nation as something that is bound to blood and soil. In *Capital, Vol. I* the nation has vanished; the *social* is something that is emerging rationally as the abstract average. Marx argues that we have to progress from *national* wealth to *social* wealth. But how is the rational emerging, and is this emergence related to the covering over of land and nation? Here Spivak proposes to look at Marx’s famous passage about a socialist society:

„Of course, if wages are reduced to their general basis, namely, to that portion of the product of the producer’s own labour which passes over into the individual consumption of the labourer; if we relieve this portion of its capitalist limitations and extend it to that volume of consumption which is permitted, on the one hand, by the existing productivity of society (that is, the social productivity of his own individual labour as actually social), and which, on the other hand, the full development of the individuality requires; if, furthermore, we reduce the surplus-labour and surplus-product to that measure which is required under prevailing conditions of production of society, on the one side to create an insurance and reserve fund, and on the other to constantly expand reproduction to the extent dictated by social needs; finally, if we include in No. 1 the necessary labour, and in No. 2 the surplus-labour, the quantity of labour which must always be performed by the able-bodied in behalf of the immature or incapacitated members of society, i. e., if we strip both wages and surplus-value, both necessary and surplus labour, of their specifically capitalist character, then certainly there remain not these forms, but merely their rudiments, which are common to all social modes of production.“ (Marx 1894, 603).

At the end of this quote we can find the trace of community in the rational spectral. As Spivak remarks: „[T]he urban telos [is] carrying the ‚previous‘ formation of the *Gemeinschaft* in its subjunctive future. The translation loses the tiny nuance, massive in its implication, by rendering *gemeinschaftlich* as ‚common‘.“ (Spivak 2000, 23) Even in Marx’s system for another future we have the residue of a former community bound by land. And where can the importance of soil be seen empirically? Apart from the relatively new discourse about land-grabbing (see Liberti 2012), I want to refer to the example of the so called ‚green revolution‘ within development rhetoric which had already started in the 1980s. Under this name, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) launched large-scale agricultural transformations in Africa, Asia, and South America in order to reduce hunger. At the heart of the ‚green revolution‘ was the expansion of high-yield seeds and watering systems as well as the use of machines and fertilizers. This has led to an intensification of social injustices between large- and small-scale farmers and within regions. Furthermore, these changes from the top down resulted in privileged treatment of industrial farming with respect to

developed labor, just as the factory system is the perfected essence of industry – *i. e.*, of labor – and industrial capital the fully developed objective form of private property.“ (Marx 1844) The English translation speaks of ‚the economic system‘ and has a footnote explaining that Marx uses the German term ‚Nationalökonomie.‘

credit, support, and subsidies and caused ecological damage through the use of chemicals as well as soil erosion from the turn to monocultures. All of these developments show that land was a main actor in the transnationalization of the pharmaceutical industry. And while commercial capital operates through banks, for finance capital today banks are just a matheme on the computer screen. Thus we have to rethink the idea of agency in Marx's writings. Although the urban sphere might have been an alternative in his day, nowadays globalization is attacking rural zones directly.

Spivak gives the following list of contemporary spectralizations of the rural as coded by world trade:

„Biodiversity (the enormous variety of plant species in ‚Nature‘), electronified for biopiracy (patenting them ‚illegally‘ with Northern patents – though legally by unilaterally established latter-day ‚laws‘ by the North, as in the famous Neem case); monocultures (Mutant hybrid high-yield seed suppressing variety, in the process depleting and literally ‚killing‘ the soil) produced by way of chemical fertilizers, themselves blips on the screen. [...] Indigenous knowledge transformed into database. *Trade Related Intellectual property Rights* and *Trade Related investment measures* abreactively punish the collectivities millennially working at the pre-measurable ‚rural‘ for not establishing property rights over its value coding. Deforestation-reforestation and the management of waters (for example, cutting down forests that are important to indigenous life- and knowledge systems, and replanting with eucalyptus that can produce 75 % pulp wood but depletes the moisture in the soil and disturbs the balance of living organisms in regions drastically, destroying mangrove and a salinating arable land to establish foreign direct export shrimp culture and devastating long established human and other life-systems and the like) belong to the earlier more commercial phase but augment the latter. And, the credit-baiting of rural women for phantom micro-enterprise is the latest twist: small scale-commercial-in-the-finance-capital market, where the perennial need of the rural poor is exploited for the commercial sector with no locally operated infrastructural change.“ (Spivak 2000, 30)

As we have seen in the last elaborations about the working of finance capital, no metropolis is structurally necessary for the spectralization of the rural. Indeed it is the abstraction of the aboriginal, the ecological, and the rural that is confronted with the violence of the global. And particularly in these fields, where the global and the local struggle with each other, we can see the emergence of resistance to the dominant forms of globalization. This resistance is represented by long established networks, which battle against globalization and disrupt and displace through their actions the workings of finance capital. And here I want to mention as an example the work of Navdanya, an activist group in India established 1984 after the violence in the Punjab and the catastrophe of Union Carbide in Bhopal, whose goal is non-violent farming to protect the earth, biodiversity and small farmers. Since 1987 they have been working on the following four objectives:

1. saving seeds in response to the crisis of agricultural biodiversity
2. promoting chemical-free organic agriculture
3. creating awareness of the hazards of genetic engineering
4. defending people's knowledge from biopiracy (see Naydanya 2012).

4. Marxism and Anti-Systemic Movements

Following explanations of the decreasing importance of labor-power, Marxism has also tried to rethink the notion that the European factory worker will bring about socialism. Before turning to non-Eurocentric movements of resistance I want to consider the thinking of one of the most well-known Marxian theorists of the revolutionary subject. Immanuel Wallerstein, founder of world-systems theory, wrote in the beginning of the 1990s about the relationship between the Old and New Left:

„The anti-systemic movements are in search of a new strategy, to replace the one they have used for 125 years – taking state power. But will they find an alternative strategy? [...] The so-called new social movements (Greens, women, minorities, etc.) have found themselves in the dilemma of the socialist movement in the late nineteenth century. The path that such movements will take, will determine whether we make the transition to something better or something worse. The problem is that no one today knows what path they will take, not even these movements themselves.“ (Wallerstein 1992, 99 f.)

In a recent article titled „Structural Crises,“ Wallerstein takes the present period of systemic crises as „an arena of struggle for the successor system“ (Wallerstein 2010). In contrast to the above mentioned publication, he seems to be more open to the politics of the anti-/alter-globalization movements. Taking over state power is explicitly alluded to in his historical account of popular movements since the second half of the nineteenth century. When he elaborates on the revolution of 1968, he states that the Old Left had been displaced „because they had failed to deliver on their historic premises – first take state power, then change the world. The militants in effect said: ‚You have taken state power but have not changed the world. If we wish to change the world we need new movements and new strategies.‘“ (Wallerstein 2010, 136) He also concedes that the Old Left had ignored the forgotten peoples because of their race, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. Thus he claims that we have to „establish a new and more just successor system to struggle against the fundamental inequalities of the world – gender, class and race/ethnicity/religion“ (Wallerstein 2010, 142). He also proposes to construct decommodified modes of production. Due to the actually confusing situation, Wallerstein concedes that there can be no formulaic agenda for what has to be done, but rather mere lines of emphasis.

Comparing the different tone of each article, it can be stated that Wallerstein has changed his view on the political projects of anti-systemic movements from thinking they would be detrimental for the articulation of class politics to now recognizing their political goals as fundamental for equality and justice. And although he does not ex-

plicitly mention taking over state power as an action we can take in the short run, he brings up „winning an election in order to maintain material benefits for those who have least“ (Wallerstein 2010, 142). Moreover, he remains relatively vague when he speaks about ‚the spirit of Porto Alegre,‘ which is a cipher for the anti-/alter-globalization movements. At this point a postcolonial-feminist perspective might ask, if this analysis and these political perspectives are true globally. And here we can learn from various new social movements in the global South that the state is no longer the main stage for movements with a worldwide reach. Nonetheless the state is the primary locus for justice and redistribution. And despite the fact that many of the Third World states in the current constellation deal with issues of nationalism,⁸ the state is after all the abstract structure that fulfills basic infrastructural functions and guarantees standards for the rule of law and redistribution. This means that the relation between non-Eurocentric movements and the government in the global South is antithetical: they have to stand behind a state which embodies the abstract structure for redistributive justice. Navdanya for example demands that the Indian government fulfill their duties towards Indian farmers, Indian consumers, the environment, and the needs of diversity and agriculture and impose a ten-year moratorium on the impending release of GMOs in the country. At the same time, these initiatives have opposed the state: for example, when the Indian government made it possible to patent the Neem tree by signing intellectual property laws after the integration of India into the world market in 1991. Spivak claims that this represents a deeply different standpoint on the state:

„Unlike many new social movements in the US and Europe, the nonelite southern NGOs – not the World Bank’s ‚international civil society‘ – have a very different attitude toward the state. Of course, they are all located in relationship to various governments, but their political programs are not contained by their governments. Instead, organizations like the Third World Network and the Asian Women’s Human Rights Council concentrate on issues like GATT. [...]. That’s partly why I’m saying that the old models will not work. When these local-against-global-resistance movements relate to the state, they stand behind the state to the extent that it is being decimated by the transnational forces. At the same time they are also against the state because it is collaborating with the agents of economic restructuring. In this sense, their relationship

⁸ Suffice it to say that the question of nationalism is not a minor one in a lot of Third World as well as second world countries and Spivak has already for a long time been attentive towards that theme. The Indian state is after 1992, when the Ayodha mosque was burned down, struggling with Hindu nationalism and the idea of a hindu nation without the muslim population. The notion of India as a multiethnic, multilingual, multireligious nation has become more controversial in the last years. In the actual situation, marked by increasingly lost hope, confusion and the failure of decolonization, the always precarious hyphen between nation and state is violently renegotiated. Renegotiated by dystopic fanatics in the name of a once glorious and pure nation, movements like the BJP in India that know the best chance for agency is to guarantee a second coming of the glorious repressed history (hindutva, a India only with and for Hindus, expelling all Muslim). Thus the postcolonial state is caught between the specters of development, nation and the recently emerging discourse of India as a global player.

to the state is robustly contradictory; it cannot be compared to the ,postnationalist,' ,poststatist' talk that we get in the Euro-US house of advanced theory.“ (Spivak 1995, 10)

Thus, from a postcolonial-feminist point of view, Marxist thinking has to realize that non-elite NGOs of the global South have no interest in taking over state power. This is also evident when we turn to discourse on development, or more precisely, on sustainable development. This new slogan is used much too often as an excuse by transnational agencies like the IMF, WTO and the World Bank to interfere in the domestic affairs of states in the global South. As a recent example of the tendency to restrict the rights of subaltern people in India, anthropologist Shalini Randeria has investigated how the state together with big NGOs like the WWF identifies and governs land with a high degree of biological diversity and labels it as a ,protected area' (Randeira 2009). Done in the name of environmental management this has led to the following precarious results for indigenous groups: the World Bank funds a program for the protection of biological diversity in the primeval forest of Gir in the western part of India, because it is the last habitat for approximately 304 African lions. Within this habitat live 1.500 nomadic families, which are classified as scheduled tribes. In accordance with the global norms of environmental protection, the right to live in, access, and use the preserve for buffalo herdsmen has been severely restricted (i. e. grazing their herds, collecting forage, fire-works, and some forest products as well as utilizing water and streets). The concept of protected areas thus functions to designate the people who have been living with their herds in the forests for generations as ,illegal invaders'. This means that environmental governance rejects the basic civil rights of *Adivasis* groups.⁹ In order to protect wildlife or biological diversity these people can be forcibly resettled or pressured to give up their lifestyle. And vice versa, people who want to stay on these preserves are denied access to the essential institutions of modern life: they have no electricity, no streets, no schools, no hospitals.

5. A New Version of Internationality: Globe-Girdling Movements from the Global South

From a postcolonial-feminist perspective, it is not helpful to reject development completely. Instead, the task should be to initiate development through local self-management.

⁹ The term *tribals* or nowadays *adivasi* (hindi = native/first people) designates the almost 70 Million indigenous population of India. The *adivasi* are not a homogenous community but separated in cultural and socioeconomic different groups. The development and integration of the *adivasi* is since the Independence of India one of the main tasks of the state. The constitution contains special rights for *adivasi* that are registered as *scheduled tribes* (i. e. seats in the National Parliament, in the educational sector and job quotas). Despite of this affirmative action they are discriminated against in the daily life and their culture is regarded as primitive and remote. The majority of *adivasi* has a very low status within the ritual (caste) and the secular (income, education, property) system. Beside different forms of exploitation and dominance, *adivasi* are disproportionately high affected by police violence, see Böck/Rao (1995) and Wagner (2006).

In contrast to the main idea of sustainable development (usually established top down) from which only the elites from states in both the North and South profit, the benefits from local forms of development would be given to the poorest and most vulnerable groups. And because of the fact that local initiatives tend to conflict with transnational capital, postcolonial states will not support these movements. This is for Spivak the reason that new social movements have to create a different notion of internationality, because states or governments are not their main targets. Thus it seems more adequate to describe these movements as globe-girdling. Compared to a lot of Western NGOs these movements have a critical stance towards 'their' states. They also try to learn their organizational ideas from the spaces of women and subaltern peoples – elements that have usually not been considered crucial for the conception and the strategies of a social movement. Furthermore we can see the difference between struggles for rights as a teleological means versus the valorization of a right that can encourage responsibility towards nature. For the subaltern the task of ecological movements is not to conserve rights of/for nature but to secure their own ecological survival by demanding a responsibility to protect nature against the dominance of capital. This also involves the status of rationality within the new social movements from the global South. As the Indian scholar and activist Vandana Shiva mentions, there is a kind of dream that results from the conviction that social changes cannot be driven by rational enlightenment alone. If we are mobilizing for non-violent ecological actions, the concept of divinity plays a central role (see Mies/Shiva 1993). And divinity doesn't necessarily carry with it a religious connotation; it can simply refer to something that is not contained within the rationality principle. If we share such an understanding of divinity, it can be argued that nature is no longer divine for nations that only control and exploit it. As we can see concerning the increasing importance of environmental problems (i. e. expectations for the UN summit Rio+20 and new ideas about green economy or green capitalism¹⁰), the idea of controlling nature leads to a global degradation of the ecobiome. Following Spivak, it is worth noticing that, in particular, less advanced groups in the so-called Fourth World (the world of indigenous collectivities worldwide) still keep notions of the relevance of nature as part of their cultural conformity. Thus, far from exoticizing or romanticizing the aboriginal, Spivak states:

„It is a matter of their [the Aboriginals, C. L.] cultural conformity, if only because they are still subaltern. What we are dreaming of here is not how to keep the aboriginal in a state of excluded cultural conformity, but how to learn and construct a sense of sacred nature by attending to them – which can help mobilize and drive a globe-girdling ecological mind-set beyond the reasonable and self-interested terms of long term global survival.“ (Spivak 1993, 115)

¹⁰ See for one exemplary view on the Summit and the new language of green economy as an pretext for the interests of corporate lobbyists and/of developed countries: <http://www.wdm.or.uk/sites/default/files/rio+20-green-economy-briefing.pdf> >16-07-2012<

6. The Spectrality of Female Bodies

The second group with which Spivak deals is the movement against reproductive and genetic engineering. In this field, which is related to the population control of Third World Women, we can see that the role of the state is again open to interpretation, because the majority of the governments in the global South have to adopt development schemes from the IMF and the World Bank. When, for example, India, after starting its economic reforms in July 1991, received a loan from the IMF, the conditions of the structural adjustment program (SAP) contained population control regulations as a crucial issue. And it is also evident that blame for the exhaustion of natural resources is often directed towards the so-called ‚population explosion‘ of women from the Third World – thus consequently onto the poorest women worldwide. And vice versa this argument redirects attention away from overconsumption in the North and focuses on Third World women as targets within international development discourse. In the publication ‚The Population Issue: A Third World Women’s Perspective,‘ released in 1993 after the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Brazil, it is stated that „since UNCED there has been an intensification of a trend in the North to promote the belief that population growth in the South is the main cause of global environmental degradation“ (People’s Perspectives, 28).¹¹ But if we take a closer look at the transfer of resources, we can see that the results are unequal and exploitative in one direction: The North with some 25 % of population consumes 75 % of the world’s resources (most of which are located in the South). In detail: the North consumes 75 % of the world’s energy, 80 % of all commercial fuels, 85 % of all wood products and 72 % of all production. Thus it is the overdevelopment of the North which is primarily responsible for global environmental deterioration.¹² As early as 1999, the researcher Klaus Leisinger reported that the 1.2 billion inhabitants of OECD-countries were using up more energy and non-renewable resources than the 5 billion people from developing countries (see Leisinger 1999).

Thus it is not merely coincidental that the official women’s policy of the UN – the Gender and Development approach of the World Bank – tries to save female subalterns through gender training and micro-credits. Against this tendency in transnational women’s politics, Spivak juxtaposes the Feminist International Network of Resistance against Reproductive and Genetic Engineering (FINRRAGE), an international feminist group with a strong influence from Southern women. Their goal is to develop *critical* positions towards the growth of reproductive and genetic technologies between individual women and feminist groups worldwide – recognizing in particular expertise and experience of women from Asia, Africa and Latin-America. In an overview of its history FINRRAGE states that:

„Since 1985, FINRRAGE has cooperated with different local or national organisations in conducting a number of national, continental, and international

¹¹ See the mentioned document at <http://www.finrrage.org/population.html>.

¹² See also the article ‚Who is to blame?‘ from the NGO Multinational Monitor about the discussions at the Rio summit 1992, http://www.multinationalmonitor.org/hyper/issues/1992/07/mm0792_04.html >20.6.2012<

conferences. The aim of these meetings is to bring together FINRRAGE activists to intensify and broaden the exchange of information and positions. From the early beginnings it was realized that the experiences and activism of women from Asia, Africa and Latin America are essential to the work of FINRRAGE. Together with women from westernized countries, their political and cultural diversity is the basis for developing common strategies for resistance. An important step towards this goal was the organization of the international FINRRAGE conference in Bangladesh, together with the Bangladeshi organization UBINIG (Policy Research for Development Alternative). The conference brought together more than 140 women from 35 countries (a majority of them from Asia) in March 1989 and greatly influenced the transnational scope of discussion and exchange.“ ((<http://www.finrrage.org/history.html> >22.6.2012<)

In particular, their non-Eurocentric viewpoint acknowledges that some policies and programs to limit population growth have had negative effects, especially on poor women. In many countries, abuses such as pressure to use specific types of contraceptives, forced sterilization, inadequate attention to contraceptive safety, poor-quality-services that ignore women's multiple reproductive needs, and barriers to access to contraceptives and safe abortion have jeopardized women's rights and health. On FINRRAGE's website there are documentations from concerned scholars and activists about the use of Norplant, a contraceptive that was given to poor women in Bangladesh and Brazil without information about the risks of the drug and which therefore subjected them to an unsafe contraceptive as a means of population control (UBINING 1990). What is important for a postcolonial-feminist standpoint on reproductive rights, the general term used in international UN documents, is that these discussions are not only about abortion but necessarily involve population control, pharmaceutical dumping, and forced sterilization as well. And this, following Spivak, does not mean denying that in Western countries there are also Christian fundamentalists who want to curtail women's right to abortion by reference to an abstract right to life for the fetus. However, if the topic of family planning is raised in the international arena, it is usually Third World women who are addressed. And is there not an implicit double standard if we force Third World women to make their reproductive decisions with reference to an ecological rationality when women in the first world demand a free choice?

Thus from a postcolonial-feminist view, all theorizing about reproductive must take into account that women in the South are threatened by restricted information about contraceptives, pressure to use long-lasting or even permanent contraceptives, disinterest of the government in general (non-procreative) healthcare, and the ignorance of doctors from population control programs.

Moreover, a postcolonial-feminist perspective considers two different female subjectivities, one being a subject who possess rights and the other a subject with responsibilities. It thus becomes clear that rights and responsibilities, which the Enlightenment in general endowed upon *one undivided subject*, are in this discussion unequally distributed between women from the North and South: the status of a subject entitled to rights is not given to subaltern women, for whom the sphere of duties and obligations is reserved.

The displacement of responsibility within the discourse about sustainable development has also been diagnosed by the Kenyan scholar Esther Wangari:

„Because these debates [about sustainable development, C. L.], whatever their precise focus, are framed within the context of lifestyle, they deflect and obscure the interconnectedness of policies imposed by the state, international financial institutions, the family planning establishment, donor countries and the apparatus of resource control and power at a global level. It also shifts the responsibility of resource conservation and consumption patterns to people in the Third World.“ (Wangari 2002, 298)

So we have the ideas of ‚overpopulation‘ or even an ‚explosion of populations‘ deployed by demographic institutions like the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the Ford and Rockefeller Foundation, the German Federal Institute for Population Research that propagate population control as adequate means against overpopulation. When we examine their writings more closely we find notions about causal connections between population control and the progress and/or development of a country (see i. e. the UNFPA side on ‚Population & Development‘ with its headline ‚Linking population, poverty and development‘: <http://www.unfpa.org/pds/> >15.07.2012<). The rhetoric of sustainable development has strengthened this nexus. After the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, higher and higher fertility rates in the Third World were blamed for lack of economic growth, environmental degradation, and the low status of women. According to the World Bank, the IMF, and donor countries, sustainable development can only be achieved by controlling fertility rates and lifestyles. Against this narrow and politically motivated point of view about who is responsible for unsustainable lifestyles, and developments Wangari sheds light on the broader context of these discussions:

„It is not fertility rates that are destroying resources, nor are they responsible for women’s lack of empowerment or improvement of well-being. After all, a family of five in the Third World may consume fewer resources than a family of two in the West. [...] But of course the debate on fertility rates in the third world obscures the consumption patterns, power, economic structures, racism and class issues which limit economic development and women’s empowerment.“ (Wangari, 2002, 308)

Referring to her research on land tenure politics in Kenya, Wangari goes on to reveal how the production of cash crops imposed by the structural adjustment programs of the IMF and World Bank has not benefited the majority of Kenyan women. Traditional staple foods, such as millet, sorghum, legumes, and varieties of beans provided nutrition for pregnant women and their families. Cutting trees for the export oriented production of coffee, tea, tobacco and cotton has resulted in the loss of minerals and vitamins due to soil erosion. Frequent use of pesticides and fertilizers, together with sewage contamination, leads to a lack of iodine and can result in miscarriages. But these connections are denied or left in the dark when we listen to the explanations of international agencies

like the IMF or World Bank, donor countries, the family planning establishment, big pharmaceutical companies, and postcolonial states and their local elites.¹³

What connects reproductive rights and population control is the fact that the female body is the target for both of them. And this is not a coincidence, as orthodox Marxists may believe, but structurally necessary. As Spivak has written in *Ghostwriting* about the peculiar corporeality within contemporary globalization: „and in the current global conjuncture woman is the dubiously feriously out-of-joint subject of the strictly Marxian vision“ (Spivak 1995, 67). If we go back to the *Communist Manifesto* Marx stated, that „the less the skill and exertion of strength implied in manual labor, in other words, the more modern industry becomes developed, the more is the labour of men superseded by women“ (Marx/Engels 1848, 62). And although this relates to the pre-Fordist factory, it has become true in the last years of globalization through the explosion of global homeworking. Investigations from the trade union Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) speak of more than 300 million homeworkers in the developing countries, of which 50 % are women (Gupta 2001). With these figures it should become clear that the patriarchally defined subaltern women in the global South are the supporters of production and that their labor has become socialized. Thus a postcolonial-feminist perspective which has digested Marx might argue that neither homeworking nor population control and reproductive health are isolated issues; instead they are systematically connected and can be described as a new socialization of reproductive labor. The ‚shorthand taxonomy of the coded discursive management of the new socialization of the reproductive body‘ contains:

„(1.) reproductive rights (*metonymic* substitution of the abstract average subject of rights for women's identity); (2.) surrogacy (*metaphoric* substitution of abstract average reproductive labor-power as fulfilled female subject of motherhood); (3.) transplant (displacement of eroticism and generalized presupposed subject of immediate affect); (4.) population control (objectification of the female subject of exploitation to produce alibis for hypersize through demographic rationalization); (5.) post-Fordist homeworking (classical coding of the spectrality of reason as empiricist individualism, complicated by gender ideology).“ (Spivak 1995, 67)

And these are the ghostly remains of the abstraction that haunts the empirical body. For Marx these are the specters which haunt the worker and make her/him understand, that ‚*es spuk*‘ (Spivak 1995, 68). And only in this form can the fetish-character of labor be grasped and turned around like a lever from capitalism towards socialism. But following Spivak, Marx has forgotten a crucial moment: the differential play between capitalism and socialism is a representation of an earlier agony between self and Other that is essential for life itself. And this becomes particularly clear when the concern is reproduction and raising children. If in contemporary times reproductive labor is freed and socialized, women will not be able to avoid this question, because the ‚commodity‘ in question is a child. And if feminism has really digested Marxism, then the new question is: would it be just if reproductive labor used the fetish-character as *pharmakon* for

¹³ For further readings see the meanwhile classical book of Hartmann (1995) and Shiva (1994).

a gender-neutral socialism? Moreover, would it be possible to establish a common fund that secures the use of female reproductive labor for a socialist distribution? We will see in future feminist works how these technological restructurings of generativity and other corporeal functions of women can be understood.¹⁴ Or in Spivak's words: „The recoding of the *pouvoir/savoir* of women in globality is an immense field. Abortion as right or murder, queerness as preference or sin, surrogacy as fulfillment or trade are only three items within it.“ (Spivak 1998, 342)

7. Deconstructing the Capitalism/Socialism Binary

As we saw in the last paragraphs, contemporary globalization depends on the reproductive body of women and especially on poor women from the Third World for its operation. It is the use-value of the labor-power of females that is appropriated for the reproduction of the First World's wealth. And as we have also noticed, we need to understand the abstraction working within the socialization of female reproductive labor-power in order to think about forms of resistance. Going back to the second counter-intuitive lesson from Marx, we learned that the capitalist pays back less to the worker than he/she has given him in the form of labor-power. But this is not an injustice for a Marxist thinker, because capital is just a rational extension of the human capability to produce more than it needs for subsistence. Thus from Spivak's perspective, Marxism cannot give an account of the injustices of capitalism. Spivak therefore approaches the binary between capitalism and socialism with a deconstructive strategy, because deconstruction deals with impossible concepts like justice and ethics, which cannot be assessed via criteria developed beforehand. Value is neither pure use nor pure exchange, and it interrupts the stabilized opposition between capitalism and socialism.

So how can we use Marx's thoughts on value in the present for future concepts of social justice and political changes? If we read Marx's explanations of alternative social organization through a deconstructive lens, socialism is not necessarily the opposite of capitalism. In Spivak's words: „it is rather a constant pushing away – a differing and a deferral – of the *capital*-ist harnessing of the *social* productivity“ (Spivak 1993, 119). Thus socialism is not the complete Other of capitalism. In contrast to what many Marxist thinkers suppose, socialism cannot, on Spivak's understanding, operate without the capital relation. But what is deeply problematic is the appropriation of productivity through private interests and groups. Instead, a truly communal (*gemeinschaftliche*) disposition towards the production of surplus-value is needed. A template for that could be found in *Capital, Vol. III*, where Marx describes how a portion of the product of the worker's labor, equal to her or his individual consumption, is relieved of its ‚capitalist limitations.‘ At the same time he claims that the amount of the use-value should be increased, depending on existing social productivity and the quantity necessary for workers to reach

¹⁴ See for example the recent debates against a redefinition of abortion as murder by the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan in June 2012 and political actions against it, in particular from women's and feminist movements: <http://saynoabortionban.com/> >26.6.2012<.

their fully developed individuality. Marx wrote in his famous passages about the realm of freedom:

„Freedom in this field can only consist in socialized man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, their human nature.“ (Marx 1894, 571)

By showing that socialism cannot function without the capital relation, Spivak deconstructs the binary between capitalism and socialism which is foundational and constitutive for Marxist ideas about emancipation. The majority of approaches dealing with capitalism and/or socialism rely on that opposition, i. e. the notion of the pursuit of happiness as opposed to responsibility towards Others. As Spivak points out, the relation between capitalism and socialism is also open to *différance*:

„Thus one could reconsider all the pairs of opposites on which philosophy is constructed and on which our discourse lives, not in order to see opposition erase itself but to see what indicates that each of the terms must appear as the *différance* of the other, as the other different and deferred in the economy of the same.“ (Derrida 1982, 17)

Socialism is thus does not stand in opposition to the capitalist mode of production but differs and defers the capitalist use of the social productivity of capital. Moreover, socialism is not a state that has been reached forever, instead it must be thought of as a constant pushing away that needs to be scrutinized carefully. Spivak's concept of socialism does not resemble claims for establishing an alternative economic system. Her point of view focuses on the non-use of capital for capitalism. This means accepting the production of capital and restricting it through a general consensus so that it cannot be appropriated by particular groups but taken up rather as a dynamic force for social redistribution. And this is not a utopian idea, because new social movements from the global South – as we have seen – are already using Marx's insights for political fights. They operate less in the cultural than in the economic sphere and formulate as one important goal „the reallocation of use of capital“ (Spivak 1995, 8). Their political tasks also include a version of development distinct from the notions propagated by the World Bank, IMF, WTO, and G 8-countries. Nor is their alternative vision for development a project that can be finished once and for all but one which is unfinishable. Spivak is thus not waiting for a revolution or insurgence. The struggle between socialism and capitalism is at the same time something to come and something already there. With respect to the recent processes of globalization, the antagonism between capitalism and socialism is located in the battle of people in the Third World for local self-determination and in their struggle against dominant forms of capital.

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