

Center for Migration, Education and Cultural Studies
Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg, Germany
Prof. Martin Butler, Prof Paul Mecheril

CALL FOR PAPERS – LONG VERSION

Resistance. Subjects, Representations, Contexts

International and Interdisciplinary Conference, 6-8 November 2014, Oldenburg

Plenary Speakers:

Peter McLaren (Los Angeles)
Gayatri C. Spivak (New York)
Peter Steinbach (Mannheim)

Featured Speakers include:

Maria do Mar Castro Varela (Berlin), Alex Demirovic (Berlin), Nikita Dhawan (Frankfurt a.M.), David Gillborn (Birmingham), Jens Martin Gurr (Duisburg-Essen), Sabine Hess (Göttingen), Kemal Inal (Ankara), Rudolf Leiprecht (Oldenburg), Kaspar Maase (Tübingen), Diana Mulinar (Lund), Anders Neergaard (Linköping), Kathrin Peters (Oldenburg), Ann Phoenix (London), Rainer Winter (Klagenfurt)

Conference Topic

A number of recent events in different parts of the world, such as the uprisings in Ukraine, Occupy Gezi, and the protests in Northern Africa, have brought back the issue of 'resistance' to both public and scholarly attention. As manifold as the *forms* that resistance takes at the beginning of the 21st century are the *explanations* for these phenomena: In western societies, the crisis of global capitalism, along with a general loss of trust in institutionalized politics, is often made responsible for the recent emergence of new movements of protests and resistance. By contrast, in regions such as Northern Africa, political uprisings have commonly been regarded as a reaction long overdue to totalitarian regimes and their infrastructures of oppression and control. With the disclosure of practices of surveillance through national secret services such as the NSA, then, similar mechanisms of power have been made visible in western societies, which, in turn, are said to have enhanced tendencies towards civil disobedience and resistance.

Not least because of its 40th anniversary and the commemoration of the host University's name patron, Carl von Ossietzky, the conference takes these developments as a starting point to explore phenomena of resistance in different historical and contemporary contexts from an interdisciplinary and transcultural perspective in order to add to a theoretical debate on the term and concept(s) of resistance. The conference will be framed by three major questions: 1. What is 'resistance'? 2. On which normative grounds do forms of resistance work, how are they legitimized? 3. Who uses the term/concept of 'resistance'? When, where, and for what purposes? In order to approach these questions, the conference takes a distinctly comparative view on the various notions of resistance in different disciplinary as well as social and/or cultural contexts in order to discuss whether 'resistance' is an exclusively 'western' concept, or whether there are concepts of resistance that are not based on or refer to western intellectual, political, or ideological traditions.

In order to approach these questions, the conference's concept is basically framed by two opposing notions of resistance, which will be put into perspective and critically assessed through an interdisciplinary and transcultural dialogue. While one notion of resistance is based on the assumption of active agency, i.e. on the capabilities of individuals to 'read' and interpret their environment and, consequently, 'act upon' it deliberately, the other one conceives of resistance as the result of the incompleteness of structures and the openness and non-totality of relationships of power.

It does not seem to be too fruitful, then, to rule out either one of these notions of resistance when examining the question of how changes of power relations in society are set into motion. In other words: Resistance that stimulates change in hegemonic regimes instead of just validating and perpetuating these regimes, is neither an act of individual heroism nor is it the outcome and expression of a self-referential structural logic only. For us, it seems to be more productive to explore the relationships *between* these two notions of resistance as well as their relationship to other concepts and approaches.

The conference sets out to enhance this endeavor, as it is supposed to be a site on which different conceptualizations of resistance are communicated and put into new, i.e. different, light. Its goal is to disclose the specific contextual preconditions, aesthetic forms, and political/ideological implications of both past and present forms of resistance. Through these context-specific approaches to historical and current phenomena and concepts of resistance, then, the conference also contributes to uncovering the highly ethical dimension inscribed into public and scholarly debates on resistance on the one hand and into acts of resistance (or what is designated as acts of resistance, respectively) on the other. In this way, the conference may help reveal the normative references that lie at the heart of both practices and discourses of resistance, but which are only rarely made explicit.

Central thematic clusters of the conference, which allow for the discussion of the major questions outlined above, are:

1. Subjects of resistance
2. Representations of resistance, and
3. Contexts of resistance.

Cluster 1: SUBJECTS OF RESISTANCE

Presentations in the cluster on 'subjects of resistance' are particularly concerned with the question of who, under what circumstances, and with what purposes, is willing and/or able to articulate protest and resistance, and/or to engage with and contribute to movements of protests and resistance. Moreover, contributions may ask if/in how far movements of protest and resistance can be understood as sites of subjectivation, i.e. if/in how far both practices of 'doing' resistance and discourses on resistance contribute to the formation of subjects (what subjects?) and to the emergence of subjectivities. Also, papers in this cluster discuss when and why (and by whom) specific subjects and their practices are labeled 'resistant,' and which political consequences and implications this 'labeling' might have or actually has.

Section 1a) Doing Gender and Resistance

This section deals with the following questions: What gender positions are considered possible and legitimate in movements of protest and resistance, to what extent do these positions affirm, challenge or suspend notions of gender (differences). Particular attention will be paid to the role of gender in processes of heroization of protagonists in movements of protests and resistance both by the movement itself and through media discourse.

Section 1b) Resistance as a Form of Subjectivation

Resistance can be examined as a discursive and political practice that creates specific subjects. Subjects of resistance are thus the result of historically specific movements of protest and resistance. At times, these subjects are highly transitory, at times, they – implicitly or explicitly – draw on historical figures forms (cf. e.g. the Occupy movement's use of Guy Fawkes); moreover, they help create continuities through processes of narrativization. This section explores theoretical approaches to and empirical manifestations of this correlation between resistance and the subject.

Section 1c) Organic Intellectuals?

This section's discussion will center on the different relationships of researchers and intellectuals to (movements of) resistance. I.e. it will look at (self-)stagings of researchers as activists, sympathizers or 'neutral' commentators. In this context, Antonio Gramsci's concept of the

organic intellectual will be focused on and critically examined from both an empirico-historical and normative perspective.

Section 1d) The Multitude and the Collective Will for Opposition

This section investigates the analytical potential of Hardt and Negri's concept of multitude (i.e. the plurality and diversity of subjects forming a political opposition) in the critical examination of current political protests and their effects. Moreover, the section sets out to explore the specific patterns of collective acts of resistance that characterize current movements of protest and resistance.

Cluster 2: REPRESENTATIONS OF RESISTANCE

In the cluster on 'representations,' the focus will primarily be on mediatization of resistance, i.e. on the different forms and functions of 'staging' resistance in different media in different historical and cultural contexts. Central questions include (but are not limited to): How is resistance presented/discussed/imagined/remembered in different media? In what ways? By whom? And for what purposes? Particular attention will be given to processes of mythologization and iconization of resistance in both historical and contemporary contexts.

Section 2a) Aesthetics of Resistance

This section investigates different modes of staging of resistance through different cultural practices and forms of expression in various historical and cultural contexts. Contributions discuss the specific aesthetics of representations of resistance as well as their different cultural, social, political and/or economic potentials, for instance in processes of shaping subjects of resistance. In so doing, contributions to this section may also discuss the category of the 'aesthetically resistant' as a discursive and/or performative ascription in processes of (self-)positioning.

Section 2b) Resisting Media, Resisting Genres

In a similar vein, but with a slightly different perspective, this section discusses whether certain media or genres prove to be particularly resistant (and if so, which media or genres?) or whether specific media or genres are said to be particularly resistant in specific contexts (and if so by whom and for what reason?). Additionally, this section will also discuss cultural practices and forms of expression that resist classification as a particular medium or genre.

Section 2c) Remembering Resistance: Icons, Myths, and the Politics of Cultural Memory

This section is concerned with forms and functions of remembering resistance in past and present contexts, e.g. in recent social or political movements such as Occupy or the Tea Party. Processes of mythologization and iconization of subjects, sites, and/or specific events – for instance, as means to produce continuity – are of particular interest.

Section 2d) (Popular) Culture and/as Resistance: Positions and Positionings

In a more conceptual perspective, this section sets out to theoretically discuss and reflect on the (past and present) processes of positioning 'high culture' and 'popular culture' with specific regard to their 'resistant potential'. The section also sheds light on the agents and institutions (for instance academic institutions, feuilletons, social/literary/artistic movements) that are involved in these processes of positioning and have thus positioned themselves in a specific way.

Cluster 3: CONTEXTS OF RESISTANCE

Finally, the cluster on 'contexts of resistance' examines different historical, political, and cultural fields in which specific practices of resistance are embedded, but which, at the same time, also contribute to shaping the very concept of resistance (among other things, as a mode of subjectivization). Moreover, what is at stake here are different theoretical (and hence historically, culturally, and disciplinarily situated) approaches to the phenomenon of resistance, a discussion of which may shed new light on

disciplinary conceptualizations and problematizations of resistance as well as on the role and responsibility of scholarly research *on* resistance.

Section 3a) School

This section will discuss the question to what extent agents and their actions in the field of education can be understood as being 'resistant' against strategies of restriction and limitation implemented by the school system. What practices of resistance, for instance, respond to unequally distributed educational opportunities? What forms of dissociation of, for instance, anti-racist pedagogical practices can be observed? And in how far can they be considered 'resistant.' What conclusions, then, can be drawn as regards the specificity of context of 'the school' when it comes to the formation and articulation of resistance?

Section 3b) Streets and Squares

This section starts from the assumption that streets and squares are sites where public life is organized and staged and, as such, they are highly political. This section, then, intends to take a look at the space of *the street* and *the square* as sites of forming and articulating resistance from a theoretical view on the one hand, and draws attention to *specific* events in different 'empirical' streets and public spaces on the other.

Section 3c) Borderlands

Borders, for instance national and language borders, do not only distinguish spaces from one another, but also contribute to the formation of exactly these spaces through the creation of difference. Moreover, borders are central points of reference in conflicts that seek to establish a "different order." This section discusses practices of resistance that are shaped by, relate to and/or revolve around this particular significance of the border.

Section 3d) Web

This section explores in how far the development of new internet technologies has produced new forms and contents of protest and resistance. Similarly, it looks at how far the spatial and social contexts of resistance have been redefined through online media. This section also discusses the question of who may or may not participate in these new forms of protest and resistance.

Expected Papers

We invite proposals for papers (max. 20 min.), which, either through the presentation of empirical research on phenomena of resistance or through theoretical/terminological discussion, address the conference's major questions – ideally, the conference may contribute to correlating both kinds of contributions and put them into a fruitful dialogue. In your proposal, please indicate in which of the three clusters („subjects“, „representations“, „contexts“) you would situate your paper. As every cluster is further subdivided into four sections, you are also supposed to indicate what you consider the most appropriate section for your contribution.

PhD Workshops

Part of the conference's program are four PhD-workshops (three hours each) with different thematic foci. Each of these workshops will be chaired by two senior scholars. The workshops will address key questions related to research on resistance and provide a platform for the presentation of PhD-projects.

Workshop 1: Researching Resistance: Methodological Questions

Workshop 2: Researching Resistance: Theoretical References

Workshop 3: Researching Resistance: Who benefits? And how?

Workshop 4: Research and Resistance – Entangled Collaboration?

Presentations of PhD-projects (max. 15 Min.) do not have to follow the 'conventional' format of a paper, but can be presented more informally as work in progress, which may well be incorporated into the workshop's overall discussion. PhD students are kindly asked to indicate whether their proposals

are meant as a contribution to one of the sections or as project presentation in one of the PhD workshops. In both cases, please make clear which section/workshop you find most suitable.

Scholarships

On condition that the conference organizers are successful in acquiring sufficient funding, scholars whose proposals have been accepted may apply for a scholarship to cover parts of the travel costs. The scholarships are supposed to allow junior scholars (i.e. PhD students in particular), who do not have appropriate funding opportunities themselves, to participate in the conference. Moreover, both junior and senior scholars whose travel costs are extremely high, as they are travelling far distances, and/or whose funding options are dramatically limited, are welcome to apply for a scholarship.

The scholarships will most likely not cover all travel costs, but at least a substantial part. The maximum amount of funding per scholarship is based on the estimated travel costs (which, as a rule, depend on the travel distance). There are three categories of scholarships:

A: For scholars from Germany: 10 scholarships, max. 150,00 Euro each.

B: For scholars from Europe: 10 scholarships, max. 400,00 Euro each.

C: For scholars from outside Europe: 10 scholarships, max. 800,00 Euro each.

Submission of Proposals (for Papers and PhD Project Presentations)

Deadline for submission of proposals (max. 1000 characters): May 1, 2014

Acceptance notification: until May 20 2014

Deadline for application for a scholarship (if proposal was accepted): June 20, 2014

Acceptance notification (scholarships): July 10, 2014

Please send your proposal to: cmc.sekretariat@uni-oldenburg.de