



Workshop Report - Struggles for hope

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Host/Organizer: Fulda University of Applied Sciences – Anja Habersang & Corinna Land

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With an intensifying climate crisis, a global pandemic and fear of an escalating war in Europe the future has become increasingly uncertain and doubt about the upcoming create a new form of realism. What largely remains unnoticed against the backdrop of this apocalyptic sentiment, is that it is in times of uncertainty that people engage in hopeful alternatives and imaginaries of a better, perhaps less doubtful future - not just imagined as a continuation of the past or the end of everything, but as something that we can hope for and that informs our everyday practices and political struggles. It is this focus on "visions and practices of future-making in the global, multifaceted crisis of capitalist modernity" that made the conference "Struggles for Hope - Negotiating the Future in Times of Global Crises", organized by Corinna Land and Anja Habersang and hosted at the Fulda Graduate Center for Social Sciences of the Fulda University of Applied Sciences particularly valuable. The question of "future" in the midst of "crisis" highlights the reality that those whose decision-making capacities are restricted, are nevertheless capable of developing complex individual and collective strategies to enhance the well-being of future generations. Future-making practices in times of crises reveal a paradox: they can either fuel or erase hope and utopian imaginaries for alternatives and improvement. Consequently, the question remains whether crises are the point of departure or the finish line of struggles for diverse utopias and ideas of hope.

Giving a platform to early career researchers to present their research in six panels over the course of two days allowed for a deep exploration of the subject matter from different angles as well as corners of the world. It was this diversity that was the

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precondition for interesting insights and conversations during the workshop. Despite the diverse methodological and theoretical and conceptual approaches concerning utopia, prefigurative politics or future imaginations and the varying local contexts, the different presentations can be connected by the role of hope as an object of analysis. Stressing that hoping for a utopia is a local, everyday practice with a strong affective dimension, raised the question of how hope and utopian visions are negotiated and what kind of politics they incite – avoiding an idealized romantic notion of hope and emphasizing its ambivalent character. Hope then becomes an energy that manifests abstract utopian imaginaries in specific spatial and temporal contexts and fuels practices directed at these utopian visions. This relation between the personal and the political, between individual hopes and collective utopian imaginaries ran through all of the three dimensions the workshop can be divided into:

Whose memories of the past, whose predictions of the future and what kind of **temporality** are taken into account? Whose modes of belonging and what kind of **spatiality** inform future visions and practices? How are these questions negotiated in current **political** struggles?

The following summaries are structured according to these questions. Furthermore, the comprehensive theoretical accounts of hope introduced by Thembi Luckett, and Corinna Land serve here as a theoretical frame for the diversity of approaches, phenomena, methodologies and local contexts presented.

Theories of Hope

The everyday life around a coal power-station in South Africa (Lephalale) serves THEMBI LUCKETT (Newcastle University) as a paradigmatic site of contradictory space-times of "modernist progress" and "fossil fuel catastrophe". Luckett's notion that "not all hopes are the same" enables her to develop analytical categories for particular hopes that draw on a specific temporality and spatiality and are manifested through the everyday struggle in Lephalale. By juxtaposing reproductive and transformative hope, Luckett explores the transformative potential of a fragile and nostalgic hope, avoiding the pitfalls of hoping for a better future within a modernist space-time.

CORINNA LAND (Fulda University of Applied Sciences and Ruhr University Bochum) understands hope as a positively charged future orientation (knowledge and practices). Her ethnographic research on rural communities in Paraguay and their struggle with neoliberal agricultural policies illustrates the ambivalent character of hope. Resisting a romantic idea of hope, Land shows how specific hopes for specific groups are fuelled

while others are disappointed by the state. That raises the question of how we come to hope for something and how to differentiate between hopeful practices of dissent and neoliberal regimes of hope. For her, hope then becomes a lens to observe how ordinary people relate to and struggle with neoliberal politics.

Temporalities of Hope

As the following contributions showed, hope and future-making practices cannot be viewed in isolation, but they are always linked to the past and present. Therefore, it is necessary to include temporality and perspectives of time as an analytical lens (Grill 2013). This includes considering both the "space of experience" and "horizon of expectations" (Koselleck 1985). Past experiences and future visions shape the struggle for hope and corresponding actions in the here and now.

Presenting the findings of her ethnographic research around a planned "Gigafactory" for battery production in Arendal (Norway) ANNA-SOPHIE HOBI (Norwegian University of Life Sciences) demonstrates the potential of researching future imaginaries as future making practices. The excitement and optimism for the future impacts Arendal's population in the present, on an individual as well as collective level (e.g., rising real estate prices, growing pride). Optimism arises from past experiences of industrial success and predictions of a green reindustrialisation. Both, past and future are helpful resources for future-making practices in the here and now.

Much in the same way PRAJWAL GAIKWAD (University of Hyderabad) shows how the Hijras - who he defines as "biological men or hermaphrodites who dress and act like women"- draw their hope from past experiences as they desire to reconnect with the pre-colonial past in order to enable a better future with more rights and recognition. The pre-colonial past thus becomes a valuable resource for their struggles against Victorian morality and Western knowledge systems introduced during colonization.

Spatialities of Hope

A similar hope to reconnect with the pre-colonial past inspires and frames the future aspirations of indigenous women in Argentina. ANJA HABERSANG (Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Ruhr University Bochum, and the University of Kassel) gives valuable insights into her research in Argentina on the 'Indigenous Women's Movement for Buen Vivir. By positioning themselves as 'body-territories' and by drawing on an alternative concept of human-nature relations, indigenous women link their struggle against extractivist with intersectional struggles against racism and sexist violation of

their bodies. Buen Vivir then means (re-)constructing reciprocity with nature that adds specific territorial and ecological dimensions to the concepts of the future.

This spatial dimension also plays an essential role in Jordanian students' imagined futures as NORINA FISCHER (Fulda University of Applied Sciences) shows in her research on the case of an international student in Germany. Fischer emphasizes how belonging, and home are contested as individuals have to navigate different belongings and corresponding social structures, obligations, and ideologies. Students shape their future visions as part of a collective, yet location has a central role to play in the realization of future visions. The student's case demonstrates that hope is personal, emotional, modifiable and at times painful as personal visions might contradict the collective's visions.

Politics of Hope

Also, ELIS DE AQUINO (Free University of Berlin) approaches future visions and the struggle for hope from students' perspectives. Brazilian students from Rio de Janeiro aim for social mobility as they are first-generation students. Their hope is to have a better future despite the difficulties of moving between social or class states and the fact that the collective future of Brazil is expected to get worse. Here, an ambivalence of hope is revealed. On the one hand, hope for the collective is decreasing while individual hope for the student's own trajectory remains optimistic. With regard to their future visions, students are less likely to be influenced by circumstances but constantly hope for a more successful future in Brazil which is connected to higher education as a resource.

ANDREA PRIORI (Fulda University of Applied Sciences) introduces "conservative utopias" of Italian-Bangladeshi youth whose future visions are reflected in everyday life practices. Based on 18 months of fieldwork in Rome, he shows how utopian views are prefigured in the present. Hence, the concept of prefigurative politics can be used to show how the structures of society are reproduced and stabilized by groups that seek change but only within very limited utopian visions. By seeking corrective measures in order to enable a peaceful inter-religious coexistence the Italian-Bangladeshi youth still affirms the general status quo. Prefiguration is thus not only something that is done by revolutionary groups but also something that is employed to stabilize the status quo.

JASMIN BEHRENDTS (Goethe University Frankfurt) sheds light on activism in the contested borders between France and Italy. Through her research she shows that Kesha

Niya - a NGO active on the EU borders - provides a temporary space of belonging to restore hope for asylum seekers by providing physical and emotional care. By providing an alternative form of humanitarian help, they enact political solidarity through practices of care that - by universalizing a vulnerable subject (Butler 2012) - prefigures an alternative society based on reciprocal and horizontal relation.

Presenting his research on the situation of orphans in India, SANNAKI MUNNA (University of Hyderabad) - raised as an orphan himself - shows that hope is not a human ability as such but something that depends on social connection and political structures. By reflecting his personal experience and struggle for hope, Munna argues for a valuable principle of care implemented in policy making based on people's experiences and their daily challenges. Hope then is not something that should solely fall into the premises of some revolutionary "bottom up" approach but becomes a political responsibility to create conditions for people to be able to prefigure the conditions and utopian futures they hope for.

NADINE BENEDIX (Technische Universität Darmstadt) applies this perspective by using narrative practices as a theoretical approach as she discusses the topic of the agency of child activists of the Transnational Network of Working Children. In international relations, working children are considered as 'governed' actors and not as dynamic political subjects. For Benedix, the child activists generate political agency by advocating not to ban child labour against international normative and legal orders. Therefore, their hopes for a future and their prefigurative practices lie within the liberal frame and they struggle for taking part, not for fundamental change.

STEPHAN LIEBSCHER (Free University of Berlin) starts by highlighting a lack of efficient organization during the "summer of migration" in Germany 2015 that could have resulted in a more successful realization of hope. He argues that the diversity of activists' struggles needs to be connected in order to result in change. As a theory of political organization that mediates between different struggles, he proposes to appropriate the organizational strategies of digital platforms to enable collaboration between different agents. For Liebscher, hope is not self-sufficient but needs organizational capacities to lead to transformation.

ANDREA SILVA-TAPIA (Justus Liebig University Giessen) and SEBASTIAN GARBE (Fulda University of Applied Sciences) provide an uplifting glimpse into present-day Chile since the social uprising since 2019 and the role of the Mapuche in the current constitutional reform. Silva-Tapia/Garbe aggregate the ongoing radical diversification of

Chilean identity and decentralization of power under the concept of 'plurinationality' and observe a move to post-liberal scripts. That raises the crucial point that when radical hope for change manages to realize itself, it implies the 'end of the world' for others (in this case the traditional (post-)colonial, neoliberal and nationalistic Chile of the past). Hope therefore can be an antagonistic or at least agonistic (Mouffe und Neumeier 2017) concept.

The diverse discussions on future visions and hope in the face of crises were mainly connected to sociological and anthropological approaches. FRIEDERIKE TELLER (University of Applied Arts Vienna) however, points to a different perspective by starting her presentation with this self-written poem. Drawing on indigenous epistemologies via the critical posthumanist discourse (Haraway 2018; Tsing 2019), Teller advocates art as a way forward from a point where the knowledge-approach of European enlightenment seems to create more problems than solutions. Hope then becomes less an

object of knowledge aiming for a knowable utopian spacetime but more a question of an affective and embodied relation to new beginnings within the ruins of the past.

Conclusion

Exploring hope and the struggle for a utopia from different angles demonstrates that they are part of the human condition and are materialized within diverse conditions and contexts of people's lives. However, hope is also characterized by an ambivalent and political dimension because the hope of an individual or collective is the fear of another. Hope and its realization in prefigurative politics thus, becomes the object of contestation for political struggles and its realization comes at a price (for others). That raises the question of who is willing to pay and how hope can be instrumentalized for future-making practices. The workshop created a platform and open atmosphere for early-career researchers to engage in a scientific dialogue on the complexity of hope, its relevance for future-making practices and the question of how to conduct

without beginning
in the middle
how to tell a story
from the end

about currents changing
wind turning
wilting leaves
speaking symbiosis
living in circles

ice becomes water
evolves into steam
till it condensates
but this is water
living in crises

loud and here
feelings vibrate
resisting the unbearable
doubt
shout
the mind embraces
an ambiguity of consistency
eyes to the soil

come closer
walk barefoot

step
towards the beginning
at the lingering horizon

it's been waiting

for the lucky ones

research on a concept that is so universal yet diverse, so close to the individual subject yet the object of socio-political struggles.

Looking for answers to these questions, the presentations were unified by a shared commitment to methodologies that take the here and now of everyday struggles as a vantage point of analysis. The potential of this focus on the everyday lies in grounding the question of a more hopeful future in observable local practices and alternative relationalities (human and "more-than-human") - however unimportant, ambivalent, and fragile they might seem. Crisis, utopia and hope thus to become understandable as notions whose intersection and shared structure open the door for generating possible economic, social, and political alternatives, away from mere theoretical considerations. In this understanding, it is essential that the politics of future making is not rooted in some grand, majestic, and abstract scheme of revolutionary change, but in fragile, ambivalent, and local practices that reconfigure the material, social, intellectual, spiritual, emotional and perhaps ecological relationality of everyday life. The workshop in Fulda was a convincing demonstration of the potential of exploring possible - perhaps utopian - futures by starting with these material and relational aspects of new beginnings.

Conference Overview

Panel 1: Hope and Transformation in Everyday Struggles

Anna-Sophie Hobi (Norwegian University of Life Sciences): Recharging for Tomorrow: On Building Norway's Battery Futures

Thembi Lockett (Newcastle University): Reproductive and Transformative Hopes in Everyday Life in a Coal Frontier

Corinna Land (Fulda University of Applied Sciences and Ruhr University Bochum): Hope and the Neoliberal State: Struggles over Rural Futures

Panel 2: Hope and Transformation in Struggles over Migration

Stephan Liebscher (Freie Universität Berlin): From Hope to Transformation. Platform Politics in the Movements of Solidarity City and Safe Harbour

Jasmin Behrend (Goethe University Frankfurt): Activism in the Contested Border Area between France and Italy: Care-Practices and their Transformative Potential

Panel 3: The (Un)making of Belonging in the Past, Present and Future

Andrea Priori (Fulda University of Applied Sciences): Conservative Utopias: Prefiguration and Islam among Italian-Bangladeshi Youth

Prajwal Gaikwad (University of Hyderabad): Envisioning Future: The Forms of Hijra Identity Assertion in Contemporary India

Panel 4: Decolonial Utopias in the Anthropocene

Anja Habersang (Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Ruhr University Bochum, and University of Kassel): Decolonising Utopia - Indigenous Women Struggling for the Art of Living

Friederike Teller (University of Applied Arts Vienna): Which Narratives help us encounter and challenge the Anthropocene within the Pluriverse?

Andrea Silva-Tapia (Justus Liebig University Giessen) and Sebastian Garbe (Fulda University of Applied Sciences): With Dignity towards a Plurinational Chile - Struggles for Hope beyond Coloniality and Neoliberalism

Panel 5: Student's Life Projects in Times of Crisis

Norina Fischer (Fulda University of Applied Sciences): The Dynamics of Imagined Futures in Face of Crises: The Case of German-Jordanian University Students

Elis de Aquino (Freie Universität Berlin): Suspended Futures? Building Life Projects in Times of Crisis: The Case of University Students from Rio de Janeiro's outskirts

Panel 6: Children's Struggles over Rights and Recognition

Sannaki Munna (University of Hyderabad): Between Struggle and Hope: Orphan Rights in India

Nadine Benedix (Technical University of Darmstadt): Between Normative Disputes and Struggle for Recognition: The Agency of Organised Working Children

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