

The first case study (chap. 4) centres on the creation of an online war memorial for the Eritrean martyrs created on Awate.com together with the aid of Asmarino.com's webmaster. Through this case study Bernal sets out to show how civic citizenship is repossessed by the network. Awate posted the list of the names of all the casualties of the 1998–2000 war for everyone to see, thus making leaked material from the government of Eritrea go public. The absence of an official state-run space for commemoration of the 1998–2000 war casualties follows its diktat not to mourn the martyrs as individuals, kin, friends, and compatriots but to celebrate their sacrifice for the nation. Bernal argues that the online memorial compensates the deficiencies of the Eritrean State which claims ownership of lives and deaths of its citizens also by concealing this information. By creating an online memorial, Awate.com repossesses the right to know the names of the deceased and to mourn the people who died for their compatriots and not for their nation-state. Even if it seems to be a thin difference, Bernal claims, the war memorial on Awate is a revolutionised perspective which asserts legitimacy and sovereignty of the Eritrean people for the Eritrean people.

The second case study that Bernal addresses (chap. 5) incorporates her former feminist work on Eritrea and Eritrean women with a recent analysis of debates on rape and violence inflicted on women by the Ethiopian and Eritrean militias. Various threads of opinions are generated online when people initiate online discussions about such sensitive and otherwise silenced topics. Bernal claims that the internet is a site for dialogue where some views are made public and posters are more inclined to confrontation even if sometimes in the form of insult. Nevertheless her final question is whether or not this is in actual fact changing the status of women. Women are describing their friends' experiences but never their own, even under pseudonyms, and they are often verbally abused for making public what should stay private and/or for "lying" about Eritrea. Women, for Bernal, continue to be "bare life": holding little or no socio-political role in Eritrean affairs, they are still regarded as mothers, sisters, and wives supporting the nation but not as citizens, nor as subjects of the Eritrean society they belong to.

While carrying out research and writing up my PhD research about the variety of identities played out among the Eritreans in Milan, I obliquely noticed that people in the diaspora were web activists, battling about Eritrean "truth" and "facts" over the internet. In 2009, the episode that struck me the most was when I noticed people changing and overwriting the information page on Eritrea in Wikipedia.org according to their political loyalty. It is clear that Victoria Bernal's "Nation as Network" touches on at least two groundbreaking topics that migrationists, anthropologists, and Eritreanists have long been waiting for. On the one hand, Bernal spotlights the internet as a social space; on the other, she highlights the online politics of identity of the Eritrean diaspora which prove to be an extremely significant and revealing political case study.

Bernal questions whether internet confrontation is enough to overcome the status of bare life that women hold. In the same way I critically engage with the Eritrean

diaspora and many other ethnicised groups that forge their belonging to such narrow affiliation, forgetting about their day-to-day rights and obligations in the world we all live in. The Eritrean network's appropriation of civic nationalism is a great success and I do agree with Bernal that this has to be celebrated. It would be interesting to understand how this achievement goes beyond what seems like a "second life" attitude on internet and how individuals are empowered in their mundane lives by this newly achieved sense of citizenship. Anna Arnone

**Bernal, Victoria, and Inderpal Grewal** (eds.): *Theorizing NGOs. States, Feminisms, and Neoliberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. 379 pp. ISBN 978-0-8223-5565-6. Price: £ 17.99

In one of the most celebrated movies of all time, the "Wizard of Oz," in her opening scene, Glenda, the Good Witch of the North, asks Dorothy, whose house had inadvertently killed the Wicked Witch of the East, "Are you a good witch or a bad witch?" to which Dorothy replied, "I'm not a witch at all."

Much discussion on the subject of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) has followed in a similar vein. There is often a moralizing, normative dimension that is behind a pair of interrelated questions: what is an NGO, and how does one classify the panoply of organizational forms that have been labeled as such? A normalizing, binary logic has often been applied, if often only implicitly, to the subject, particularly in regards to NGOs' relationships to states. As is rehearsed in many a book or article on NGOs, the late 1980s and 1990s heralded foreign donor support to NGOs, and development economists and political scientists, not to mention NGO practitioners, celebrated NGOs as counterweights to states, locked in an ideological zero-sum game. NGOs were heralded as the "magic bullet" (Edwards and Hulme, *Beyond the Magic Bullet. NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World*. West Hartford 1996; Fisher, *Doing Good? The Politics and Antipolitics of NGO Practices. Annual Reviews in Anthropology* 26.1997: 439–464). A little later, especially as the magic wore off, anthropologists and other humanistic social scientists, particularly women's studies scholars, began a critical trajectory in NGOs' roles within neoliberal restructuring schemes. NGOs became "bads" to the "goods" of social movements; many feminist scholars found critical language and theorizing in "NGOization" employed by two contributors to the present volume. Sonia Alvarez's (*Advocating Feminism. The Latin American Feminist NGO "Boom." International Feminist Journal of Politics* 1/2.1999: 181–209) discussion of the "NGO Boom" in the 1990s within Latin America provided helpful tools for self-critique of the loss of autonomy within officially-funded NGOs. Sabine Lang's (*The NGO-ization of Feminism*. In: B. G. Smith (ed.), *Global Feminisms since 1945*; pp. 290–304. London 2000) discussion of "femocrats," gender experts working within European Union bureaucracies, was also a warning against the dangers of depoliticization. A critical trajectory continued in the new century, which included

the work of Indian feminist activist and novelist Arundhati Roy, Richa Nagar and the Sangtin Writers' (Playing with Fire. Feminist Thought and Activism through Seven Lives in India. Minneapolis 2006) discussion of the disciplinary power of a women's NGO, and in the U.S., INCITE! Women of Color against Violence's (The Revolution Will Not Be Funded. Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex. Cambridge 2007) denunciation of the "nonprofit industrial complex." This discussion has often led to what Amanda Lashaw (How Progressive Culture Resists Critique. The Impasse of NGO Studies. *Ethnography* 14/4.2013: 501–522) referred to as an "impasse" within NGO studies. Some of the most vocal critics of what the editors Bernal and Grewal call the "NGO form" could be defined as NGOs themselves. Like Dorothy, they reject the label. A little later in the conversation, Dorothy said that witches are old and ugly, to which Glenda replied, only the bad ones. In this vein, NGOs are hierarchical and bureaucratic, depoliticizing, etc., say critics within groups that could otherwise be defined as NGOs. Owning and claiming this label, many could respond, only the "bad" ones. This politicization of the label can thus prevent serious self-critique and good functioning of NGOs.

Feminist scholarship has long contributed critical language deconstructing both binaries and labels. This is clearly evident in "Theorizing NGOs. States, Feminisms, and Neoliberalism," a volume in the Next Wave series by Duke University Press, with an established reputation for theoretically cutting-edge scholarship. Editors Bernal and Grewal sharpen the focus on the epistemological uncertainties and the often hidden normative and political agendas behind NGOs' definition as what-they-are-not: states. Describing a shape-shifting organization in northern India, contributor Aradhana Sharma (Crossbreeding Institutions, Breeding Struggle. Women's Empowerment, Neoliberal Governmentality, and State (Re)Formation in India. *Cultural Anthropology* 21/1.2006: 60–95) has specifically theorized feminist, poststructuralist concepts hybridity, and blurring boundaries within NGOs. Bernal and Grewal adopt these concepts as meta-themes for the volume. Appropriately, the volume itself is hybrid: six of the chapters have already been published, and five find their first place in printed form in these pages. Contributors straddle disciplinary boundaries and geographical areas of discussion, with overrepresentation of anthropologists and South Asia and Europe. The chapters, all of which specifically contribute feminist analyses of women and gender, which also offer critique, vary in their critical orientation. This diversity of voices and approaches is one of the volume's many strengths, making it a good snapshot of a range of engaged feminist theorizing on NGOs. It also reflects the uncertainties inherent to the NGO form itself.

Part 1 signals the undoing of binary frames, "NGOs beyond Success or Failure." The book begins with an analysis of the "movementization of NGOs," inverting the NGOization concept, by Elissa Helms, about NGOs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Helms concludes that "most of these NGO women would not have become activists at all had it not been for foreign intervention" (45). Lauren Leve discusses a case of NGOs in Nepal offering "em-

powerment" activities that, far from being accommodationist and depoliticizing, can actively provide support for women's revolutionary struggles, even against embedded neoliberal frames. This chapter is followed by Sharma's essay on the Mahila Samakhya, which at times staff define as a government agency and others, an NGO, depending on the context and strategic benefits.

Part 2, "Postcolonial Neoliberalisms and the NGO Form," offers the most "critical" read of NGOs, addressing the instrumental uses of NGOs. Julie Hemment's essay begins this series, deconstructing the "good NGO" / "bad NGO" binary, continuing to press beyond the success/failure binary in the first section. Hemment's analysis of Russian NGOs addressing gender-based violence point out the ways in which donors' foreign frames trigger unexpected and often harmful ways. Kathleen O'Reilly analyses the paradoxes of women's participation in a North Indian NGO in a field fraught with caste and class inequality, defining who are "authentic" village representatives. She concludes that the dialogic space created inspired positive change even though some relationships of power remain unaltered. LeeRay M. Costa notes that Thai women, especially of lower social status, reject "feminism" as being foreign, upper-class, or imperialist. Citing Nagar and the Sangtin Writers, Costa concludes that multiple visions of feminism, with locally-defined discourses and practices, are necessary. The final word in this section is given to Lamia Karim, who details how the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, aiming to empower women through microcredit, disrupt women's honor and respectability and reproduce the same systems of inequality in their coercive repayment schemes.

Setting the tone for Part 3, "Feminist Social Movements and NGOs," is Saida Hodžić's "Feminist Bastards," published for the first time in this book. Hodžić begins with "the NGOization paradigm now organizes feminist knowledge about NGOs, often constraining the space of analysis and critique" (222). Hodžić invokes foundational women's studies scholar Joan Scott's notion of the "blind spots" required to maintain such a critique, and draws parallels between NGOization and critiques of institutionalized academic feminism. Hodžić argues that this critique romanticizes a past that never existed. Hodžić takes this theorizing to an ethnographic case study in Ghana. Laura Grünberg offers a first-person account of a women's NGO in post-communist Romania, concluding that "change happens no matter what, but that you can push it in the right direction by doing something instead of just endlessly criticizing what is happening" (264).

"Theorizing NGOs" is mature scholarship; the book ends with retrospective and critical reevaluation essays from the two foundational authors first noted, Lang and Alvarez. Lang discusses Alison Woodward's notion of the "velvet triangle" (as opposed to the "iron triangle"), suggesting that the term is "more fluid, less rigidly shielded exercise of power" between institutional and non-institutional actors (267). Lang notes that feminist activists adapted their form to participate in European Union governance. Many individual activists' careers also cross these boundaries. Despite very minimal funding streams,

the official reward structures reproduce institutional forms that mirror those in governance. Alvarez offers an update to her thesis, first contextualizing the broader argument in the much-cited “NGO boom,” saying that NGOization was never a quantitative measure. Like other authors Alvarez concludes that women’s NGOs can offer space and resources for feminist social movements. Alvarez also notes national socialist Latin American contexts wherein street-level activism and popular ties, not institutionalization or professionalization, are rewarded. She concludes that “[t]here is, in short, no twenty-first-century Iron Law of NGOization” (299).

The diversity of the analyses can be a challenge, recalling the expression where you stand depends on where you sit: the most critical essays in the volume, including Karim’s, center the perspectives of NGO beneficiaries as opposed to staff dilemmas. Karim’s discussion is also of the much-vaunted Grameen Bank, the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize recipient. The Grameen Bank is hardly the same as local NGOs like “Our Water” O’Reilly discusses, or “AnA” in Grünberg’s chapter. The difference may also reflect changing times and realities: as Alvarez noted in her chapter, conditions and realities surrounding feminist NGOs changed in the decade following the publication of her first piece. Lang calls to question Verta Taylor’s concept of abeyance, saying instead that the new institutional configurations are changing the reward structures. Managing his diversity, a typical challenge within edited volumes is coherence, the pieces fitting together in a whole that is greater than the sum of its chapters. “Theorizing NGOs” is a model for coherence: the authors cite one another, including previously published works, truly an extended conversation. While this might be done at the expense of excluding the more radical analyses of INCITE! and the Sangtin Writers collective, this book offers a successfully integrated, cross-cited, unity that sets a remarkably high bar, which mirrors the feminist NGOs’ attention to spaces for dialogue and engagement.

As such “Theorizing NGOs” invites scholars to continue the analysis and conversation. The incongruities and contradictions noted above reflect the inherent, one might say productive, instability within the “NGO form.” This book explores the limits of this concept. Just like the website “feministing” to move beyond the impasse about what counts as a “feminist” in the noun, perhaps it might be useful to think of NGOs as a verb (Sharma, Notes on the Difficulty of Studying NGOs. In: M. Schuller and D. Lewis (org.), Conference Session: What’s in a Name? Tracing Anthropology’s Uneasy Ethnographic Engagement with NGOs. Washington 2014; Schuller, Humanitarian Aftershocks in Haiti. New Brunswick forthcoming).

“Theorizing NGOs” is in short a must-read not only for women’s, gender, and sexuality studies’ scholars and students but also those of us specifically working on NGOs. It is a solid reference text offering something to a diverse readership. Mirroring the work of many women’s NGOs in translating and bridging different constituencies, “Theorizing NGOs” brings feminist studies and NGO studies together. For NGO studies, “Theorizing NGOs” offers particularly nuanced understanding of the

NGO form, and its shifting and often contradictory relationship with states. The book offers up-to-the-moment theorizing, attempting to move beyond normative binaries and a definitional impasse. Also importantly, “Theorizing NGOs” grounds the discussion in women’s or feminist NGOs, offering a needed counterweight to analyses of development and humanitarian NGOs that predominate. For feminist scholarship, “Theorizing NGOs” points to the overarching themes of the NGO form, discussing the ways in which the reward structures constrain the autonomy of women’s organizations, with donors shaping the agendas and disciplinary rules of engagement rewards institutional, professional, advocacy.

Mark Schuller

**Bierschenk, Thomas und Eva Spies** (Hrsg.): 50 Jahre Unabhängigkeit in Afrika. Kontinuitäten, Brüche, Perspektiven. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2012. 572 pp. ISBN 978-3-89645-829-2. (Mainzer Beiträge zur Afrikaforschung, 29) Preis: € 58.00

Die Jubiläumsfeiern, die viele Staaten Afrikas um das Jahr 2010 begingen und mit denen sie ein halbes Jahrhundert politischer Unabhängigkeit zelebrierten, nahmen Thomas Bierschenk und Eva Spies zum Anlass, eine Bilanz der vergangenen 50 Jahre afrikanischer Geschichte zu ziehen. Ihre Bilanz schließt sowohl die Performanz afrikanischer Staaten und die Identifikation mit der Nation ein als auch die wissenschaftliche Reflektion, die während dieser Zeit über Afrika entstanden ist. Diesbezüglich identifizieren sie zwei Perspektiven auf Afrika. Die eine hebt wirtschaftliche und politische Gemeinsamkeiten in afrikanischen Gesellschaften seit der vorkolonialen Zeit hervor, die andere versteht Afrika als ein Konstrukt Europas, das den Kontinent zum Gegenstück der eigenen Gesellschaft macht. Beide Positionen sind nicht unvereinbar, wobei die Herausgeber in den kolonialgeschichtlich bedingten, ähnlich angelegten politischen Strukturen afrikanischer Staaten ein markantes gemeinsames Merkmal sehen, nämlich eine Tendenz zur Rentenökonomie.

Aus dieser Feststellung heraus entwickeln Thomas Bierschenk und Eva Spies eine erste These. Sie besagt, die Unabhängigkeitserklärungen um die 1960er Jahre und die Jubiläen der 2010er Jahre stellten nicht die entscheidenden historischen Zäsuren dar und erschienen weniger einschneidend als die Kolonialzeit selbst und die Liberalisierungs- und Demokratisierungsbestrebungen der späten 1980er und frühen 1990er Jahre. Der Blick auf den Staat kontrastiert dabei mit den gesellschaftlichen Dynamiken und dem Streben nach diskursiver Autonomie (Patrice Nganang) in vielen Bereichen der Kulturproduktion. Die zweite These lautet daher, es seien weniger die politischen und wirtschaftlichen Entwicklungen, sondern mehr die gesellschaftlichen und kulturellen Trends, vor allem der Jugend, die Afrika zu positiver Veränderung antrieben.

Die Mehrzahl der Autoren, die zu diesem lesenswerten Band beigetragen haben, war angehalten, diese Thesen anhand eines Schwerpunktthemas zu prüfen. Sie sollten den Kontinuitäten in den geschichtlichen Entwicklungen im Afrika des 20. Jh.s und den historischen Zäsuren und