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Anthropological Standpoints on Neoliberal Governmentality, with a Special Focus on the Case of the People's Republic of China*

Introduction

A number of anthropologists have occupied themselves with the question of what it is that constitutes neoliberalism. Their viewpoints and conclusions differ, which is one reason why it can be difficult to straightforwardly answer the question. But what do we even mean when we say that a state-societal entity can be characterised as “neoliberal”? At what stage does it become so? Is there a point that may be reached in order for such an entity to “turn” neoliberal in nature?

As a starting point, it seems useful to introduce some of the ideas that have been developed in order to define “neoliberalism” as such. In this regard, some of the leading analytical frameworks in the Social Sciences are the various analyses brought forward by Michel Foucault. In connection to this, I will present a more general introduction to Foucault's concept of “governmentality”. The governmentality approach serves as the predominant analytical access to neoliberalism for those anthropologists whose texts I will discuss in the second half of the article. But Foucauldian analysis has also served as a tool for my own understanding of “technologies of governing” (Ong 2006: 3) and of the way neoliberalism can be dismantled by way of critical analysis. I will initially engage with sociological works by Foucault himself, such as papers and extracts from lectures (1990, 1991a/b, 2010 etc.), also examining authors whose primary objective is to exclusively analyse Foucault's ideas, such as Călin Cotoi (2011) and Colin Gordon (1991).

Undertaking a theoretical anthropological study means I have made sure to focus on those anthropological texts that deal with concepts of governmentality and neoliberalism. Notably among these are James Ferguson (2009), and Mathieu Hilgers (2010), who have examined the ways that neoliberalism is used and approached among anthropologists, and authors, such as Jonathan Inda (2005), who illustrate the effects of Foucauldian methodology on anthropological undertakings. I will mainly concentrate, however, on works on neoliberal governmentality within the framework of case studies in non-European contexts, with a special focus on examinations concerning China. Ferguson (2009) and Aihwa Ong's (2006) works will serve as concrete examples in African and Asian contexts. The particular case of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has in this respect also been starting to attract the attention of various scholars (see Anagnost 2004; Greenhalgh/Winckler 2005; Kipnis 2006, 2007, 2008; Sigley 2004; Xu 2011). A trend which, faced with China's contemporary international position, seems unlikely to ebb away any time soon. I have, therefore, focussed on the case of China in particular. I will describe and analyse approaches taken by anthropologists of China in more detail, illustrating the phenomena they have taken as indicative for the existence/non-existence of neoliberalism in the PRC. Some of the studies I will concentrate on are Greenhalgh and Winckler (2005), Nonini (2008), or Kipnis (2007, 2008). The case of China shall in this regard serve as further illustration of how analyses following Foucauldian conceptions may take place within

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diverse frameworks and seemingly paradoxical situations. This shall provide a compelling example of how a specific case of governmentality may be approached and dismantled; a case outside of Europe, which is characterised by dynamism and perceived contradiction. The conclusions I draw from particular anthropological discussions and my respective interpretations will constitute the final part of this paper.

An analysis and comparison of literature on the subject were the method of choice for this study. The literature was examined according to its potential contributions towards answering the following main research question: What are the factors used by contemporary anthropologists to portray neoliberal governmentality and how are these portrayals and findings anthropologically applied to concrete examples in non-European contexts, particularly the People's Republic of China?

The question of diffusion versus independent invention is not a new one within the field of anthropology. In connection to neoliberalism, its apparent origins and supposed spread, the question has more recently reappeared. It remains to be seen whether liberalization mechanisms in non-European contexts have developed in an idiosyncratic fashion or whether they were turned by the spread of a Western Neoliberalism into a mirror image of the latter (Kipnis 2008: 25f.). Before starting my investigation into these questions and others, I will first attempt to clarify the approaches and concepts introduced by Foucault.

Governmentality, Neoliberalism and Neoliberal Governmentality

Foucault seems to have viewed the European developments of the twentieth century as creating a need for special ways of conceiving state-societal entities (Gordon 1991: 3). Whilst the understanding of contemporary phenomena and situations may have been the goal of his analyses, the starting point for his examination of "governmentality", or "art(s) of government" can be found through examining historical events. In one of his 1978 lectures at the Collège de France, he illustrates his analysis by beginning with sixteenth-century Europe (Foucault 1991b:87ff.). He sets out by describing certain events of that time as creating the need for a new way of conceiving government: he sees at a crossroads the structural crumbling of feudalism and the question, resulting from Reformation and Counter-Reformation, of how spiritual rule was to be implemented from then on (ibid.). In order to demonstrate these changes and their results, Foucault used two main literary works of that time, the theory of one informing and being adapted by the other. The first is Machiavelli's "The Prince" (1995) whose essence he describes as a "[...] treatise about the prince's ability to keep his principality" (Foucault 1991b: 90). Since the prince or ruler is essentially external to his/her principality, his/her link to, and therefore hold on this principality is fragile. The goal is not to "reinforce, strengthen and protect the [...] objective ensemble of its subjects and the territory" (ibid.), but to assert the ruler's ties to this principality and his/her maintaining power. Foucault goes on to say that what the great number of anti-Machiavellian scholars at the time wanted to use as replacement for this notion of "sovereign rule" in "The Prince" is the "art of government". To illustrate this, Foucault singles out Guillaume La Perrière's "Miroir Politique" as one opposing literary work of that period. La Perrière is described as taking the step of introducing and defining the words "to govern", "governor" and "governing". La Perrière's approach is radical because, besides its denominating the monarch or prince, the term "governor" is used by him also for the "[...] magistrate, prelate, judge and the like" (La Perrière 1567: 24, cit. by Foucault 1991b: 90). Similarly, the term "governing" is also applied to running a household or religious order, where it had previously only denoted the operating of the principality (ibid.). According to Foucault, most notably, La Perrière replaces the

emphasis on territory with that on so-called “things”: whilst territory was the crucial entity according to Machiavelli's sovereign rule by the prince, La Perrière's “government is [now defined as] the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end” (La Perrière 1567, cit. by Foucault 1991b: 93). Foucault goes on to deliberate this definition and the disruption it represents with the old notion of principality and sovereignty. For him, the “things” describe, in fact, a “complex composed of men [sic] and things” (ibid.) and in order to explain what is meant by their “disposition”, he provides the metaphor of governing a ship. This includes the governance of the sailors, apparently representing the population, but also the boat and its cargo, which could be seen as some sort of territory and its riches. Additionally the forces of nature, affecting the whole enterprise, need to be reckoned with, which in my view represent any sort of outside political forces onto an entity to be governed but also, in a literal sense, natural hazards of any kind (ibid: 93). What needs to be kept in mind is that the person governing the ship, let us say the Captain, has to establish relationships between the sailors and all other things described, for she herself/he himself could never single-handedly take care of all of these matters. The Captain, therefore, needs to conduct the whole enterprise, which implies conducting the actions of the sailors, who will in turn have to conduct themselves in an appropriate fashion, and who will have to establish the necessary relations or connections to all those things on that boat which need to be handled, in order to reach the so-described “convenient end” (ibid.; cf. also Inda 2005: 1).

Having described the historical emergence of (the concept of) governmentality, I will now introduce some of its central characteristics as put forward by Foucault himself, Jonathan Inda, and others. Inda (2005: 6) draws from Foucault's literature a number of essentials characterising his concept of governmentality, three elements to governmentality he takes to be the most important. One of them defines the principle target of government, the entity governing is directed towards: the population (ibid.). Governing means acting “upon the particulars of human conduct so as to enhance the security, longevity, health, prosperity, and happiness of populations” (ibid.). Foucault sees the population

“as a set of elements that, on the one hand, form part of the general system of living beings [...] and, on the other hand, may provide a hold for concerted interventions (through laws, but also through changes in attitudes, ways of doing things, and ways of living that may be brought about by ‘campaigns’).” (Foucault 2009: 366)

Another basic element of governmentality, perhaps the most fundamental one, is that following La Perrière, the term “government” is understood by Foucault in a different way than is now common: instead of merely alluding to the actions of state, it is seen as having a much broader meaning, referring in general to any “conduct of conduct”, “any rational effort [by any agent] to influence or guide the comportment of others [...] through acting upon their hopes, desires, or milieu” (URL 5: 6). Power, therefore, is no longer solely within the sphere of the state. This fact is connected to the last essential element of governmentality, defining further those entities in a given socio-political structure that hold governmental agency, or, in other words, power or authority. Inda writes: “for Foucault, governing [...] involves a multitude of heterogeneous entities [...] not simply the state but also all these other actors, organizations, agencies concerned with exercising authority over the conduct of human beings” (Inda 2005: 6).

If we remember the metaphor of governing a ship, the power lies not only with the Captain but with anybody on the ship without whose proper conduct the ship may sink. Considering the conditions of a sailing boat, a huge vessel, at sea, this is bound to include almost anyone on that ship.

With regard to the concept of power, we will now return a bit closer to the present situation. Cotoi (2011: 112) points out that post-1945 trends in particular led to a place where the “state/civil society/market” model can no longer hold as a tool for grasping contemporary mechanisms of power and the position and role of the subject. “Foucault tries to understand how practices, discourses and events are formed around that ‘something’, that empty place, where ‘state’, ‘politics’ or ‘economy’ used to reside” (ibid.: 112). He attempted to dissolve “universals” such as the state and civil society rather than conceiving of them as competing opposites (cf. ibid.). Concerning the relation of economy and politics in this respect, Thomas Lemke skilfully illustrates the governmentality standpoint by writing:

“[...] as we know since Marx there is no market independent of the state, and economy is always political economy. [...] The perspective of governmentality makes possible the development of a dynamic form of analysis that does not limit itself to stating the ‘retreat of politics’ or the ‘domination of the market’ but deciphers the so-called ‘end of politics’ itself as a political programme.” (Lemke 2000: 10)

The Machiavellian notion of drawing a concrete line between the political sphere and any other is dissolved. Instead, with the new model of government, the areas of governing progress into each other, like a spiral of power spheres (ideally) complementing one another (Foucault 1991b: 91). Of particular concern to Foucault were in this regard also discursive practices in a given object of analysis. Discourse, in the sense of Derrida, describes the mechanisms of power behind the establishment and the subsequent unconditional defence of “truths”, which are seen as absolute and monolithic (Wilchins 2006: 56f.). This production of “truth” is dependent on the creation of knowledge and the according determination of what constitutes knowledge and what is regarded as legitimate knowledge. In this regard, “Western” science has played a significant role: concepts that emerged or gained momentum during the Enlightenment period turned into so-called grand narratives and have since been residing in spheres of authority, notably the natural sciences. This development can be witnessed also when considering “scientism”, a viewpoint which takes a dogmatic stance in that it generally excludes any non-positivist methods and “lays claim to an exclusive approach to knowledge” (URL 2). We shall see below, for instance, that “scientism” has also gained a significant role in the context of PRC discourse creation since its Opening Up period (cf. Greenhalgh/Winckler 2005: 289ff.; Greenhalgh 2005: 358; Kipnis 2008: 286f.).

Neoliberal governmentality, for example, is characterised by an emphasis on the market to the extent that has become “a space of *veridiction*, of enouncing the truth and of verifying the government” (Cotoi 2011: 113), and therefore a central locus of power exercising in connection to the production of discourse.

We have seen that power, for Foucault, can be portrayed as having to be analysed as fragmented onto different levels, spheres, and also subjects. This fragmentation thesis generally ensures a complex understanding of power location. Following Foucault, “the polarity of subjectivity and power ceases to be plausible: government refers to a continuum, which extends from political government right through to forms of self-regulation” (Lemke 2000: 12).

In this regard micro-level processes that are hidden from the superficial eye along with emphasizing the role of discourse are just as important as analysing meso-level non-state places of power articulation, such as institutionalised science and localities for the execution of “discipline and punish[ment]” (Foucault 1991a).

If we consider such meso-level institutions, the prison as one example is used by Foucault to exemplify quite clearly the role the human body is starting to play within governmentality: here, he says, imprisonment does not just include deprivation of liberty. Added to this is “a certain additional element of punishment that [...] concerns the body itself: rationing of food, sexual deprivation, corporal punishment, solitary confinement” (ibid.: 16). This important aspect of Foucault’s governmentality approach concerned with the human body is not just found on the meso-level but in connections between micro- and macro-level analysis too. The term Foucault applies to it is “biopower”: a manifestation of potency that is positioned most closely to the physical bodies of population members, concerned with matters “of individual sexual and reproductive conduct interconnect[ed] with issues of national policy and power” (Gordon 1991: 5). The subject evidently takes a more central role in governmentality concepts, in connection to practices of power and practices of domination, which are treated as dissimilar and analysed as mechanisms of subjectification (cf. Lemke 2000: 2f.; Yan 2003). Inda (2005: 5) notes that “as the care and growth of population becomes a fundamental concern of government, a novel technology of power takes hold.” And, he explains, this technology is what Foucault termed “biopower”.

“[I]t was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, [*sic!*] that gave power its access even to the body. If one can apply the term *bio-history* to the pressures through which the movements of life and the processes of history interfere with one another, one would have to speak of *bio-power* to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life.” (Foucault 1990: 143)

The threat of and decision over the death of a person was now replaced by the importance of the provision and assurance of life. Following Foucault, this seems to represent *the* essential step for power to have taken.

Since power has been dispersed onto different levels, spheres and agents, it also makes sense to speak of the goal of government (as opposed to what we heard about the goal of the prince) as being the very reproduction of the state-societal entity; its continuity, and the “welfare of each and all [members of the population]” (Inda 2005: 5). Biopower happens on two different but necessarily intertwined levels: the body of the individual and the collective body of the population. Accordingly, Foucault described the concept of having two corresponding forms, which he named, respectively, “biopolitics” and “discipline” (or “anatomy-politics”) (ibid.). Both forms are focused on human life. Anatomy-politics is concerned with the body of the individual while biopolitics cares about the “population [...] as a species body” (ibid.). The former approaches the body in order to manipulate it, with its goal being the production of “human beings whose bodies are at once useful and docile” (ibid.: 6). In Foucault’s own words, this earlier form of biopower “[...] centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls” (Foucault 1990: 139).

Meanwhile, biopolitics is concerned with the quantification of bodily phenomena, so as to monitor in order to calculate and implement “large-scale campaigns, or [...] techniques that will make possible [...] the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions or activities, etc.” (Foucault 1991b: 100). The concept of the proper reproduction of the population and all of the parts internal to it, including individual bodies, comprises the facet of sexuality and its subordination to (bio-)power. Both forms of biopower need to act simultaneously to achieve this goal of continuity. Biopolitics “is concerned [also] with regulating [...] the size and quality of the population” (Inda 2005: 5). The particular

problematic of population “quality” is taken up by Greenhalgh and Winckler (2005) and Greenhalgh (2005) who refer to a specifically neoliberal biopolitics as “a politics of the administration of life by increasingly market-oriented means” (2005: 9). Biopower with its connection to population governance is of crucial interest to them. As analysts of contemporary China, their research shall be discussed in more detail below.

Foucault generally appears to be involved with finding models of analysis that are less polarising and leave room for possibilities of reconciling dynamic concepts rather than dichotomizing black-and-white universals. Regarding this tendency, Gordon (1991: 6) attests to the governmentality approach an “exemplary abstention from value judgements”. He even refers to Foucault apparently not denying neoliberalism abilities at being intellectually attractive (*ibid.*). This open-mindedness is one aspect that makes Foucauldian theorisation in general as convincing as his analysis of neoliberalism precious. We will now turn to what it is he had to say about the latter.

Foucault’s 1978/79 lectures on “The Birth of Biopolitics” (2010) include essential thoughts and historical analyses on his part of how neoliberalism came about and its distinctions from liberalism. Foucault, in his analysis of the “Western” post-war period, distinguishes between different “Versions of Neo-liberalism” (Gordon 1991: 41). Analysing the cases of West Germany, the United States, and France, he respectively examines the differently characterized neoliberalisms of each (though amongst certain commonalities) (*ibid.*: 41ff.). While the general model for discussions nowadays seems to be the American one, scrutinization of the West German version is of importance if we want to escape the idea of one universal Neoliberalism. The West German form is connected by name to a group of “jurists and economists” known as the “Ordoliberalen”, who were significantly involved in the conception of this new model of governmentality. Foucault characterises the shift from the century-old liberalism brought about by eighteenth-century physiocrats and economists to this West German model of the Ordoliberals. According to him, what had been at stake for liberalism was the limiting of an already existing and fully functioning administrative state in order to liberate “the economy” with all its processes and mechanisms (Foucault 2010: 86). The problem for West German economists (and the politicians who followed suit) in the wake of World War II was, in a way, the opposite: the establishment or construction of a new (German) state, now on the basis of a “space of economic freedom” (*ibid.*: 87, 116). Foucault goes to great lengths in order to explain the historical situation at the time and the behaviour and strategies of the leading German post-war politicians, who were accomplices in this project (*ibid.*: 87ff.). Notable here is the winning over of the German Social Democratic Party who supplemented and therewith watered down their traditional and original Socialist programme in favour of a tendency towards the emerging neoliberal primate (*ibid.*: 89ff.). In connection to this, Foucault asserts that socialism as such generally could not exist in practice on its own (*ibid.*: 92). He says that he does “not think that there is an autonomous socialist governmentality. [That] [t]here is no governmental rationality of socialism” (*ibid.*). According to him it is, as a trait of character, always “connected up to” (*ibid.*) other forms of governmentality; be that liberal governmentality or possibly neoliberal governmentality (*ibid.*: 92f.).

When it comes to neoliberalism, however, Ferguson concludes that it too could not in reality exist in its “doctrinal” form, which would result in its own downfall (cf. Ferguson 2009: 170). According to this way of thinking, it seems that similar to a virus, the market logic of neoliberalism must infiltrate and reprogram cells once run by a philosophy of public sector primacy. In its most consistent form, it seems the virus would kill the host altogether, automatically terminating itself in the process. Perhaps a conclusion to be drawn from this train of thoughts might be that here too, only hybrids between neoliberalism and other

rationalities of government may exist in reality. This idea will be dealt with further partly in connection to Ong's anthropological concepts of "neoliberalism and exception", discussed in greater detail below.

The main principles of German ordoliberalism can be described as the following: firstly it is "an internal reorganization that [...] does not ask the state what freedom it will leave to the economy, but asks the economy how its freedom can have a state-creating function and role" (Foucault 2010: 94f.) to legitimize the state. Also, what is seen to be of most importance is the protection of apparently fragile market mechanisms by the administrative apparatus, with the state being there, fundamentally, to serve the market as establishing the best-possible conditions for it to prosper (ibid.: 240).

Although Foucault spends a much greater amount of time talking about Ordoliberalism in his lectures on "The Birth of Biopolitics", I would like to describe some of his analyses of American neoliberalism, since it too will be important considering the anthropological analyses below. Foucault explains that the context within which it emerged was (and remains) very different from the European models. He talks again about the transformation from liberalism to neoliberalism and sets the stage by explaining how the United States' policies have been revolving around the question of liberalism as a sort of central object for scrutiny for centuries. In this regard, it seems, though not explicitly stated by him, that what Foucault means initially is liberalism in the political sense, which has been at the centre of US political debate throughout historical events, be that the War of Independence (a war for liberation from the crown), the roles and degrees of (in)dependence of the respective single states vis-à-vis the federal state, or even the current debate on healthcare reform (ibid.: 217). Liberalism in the economic sense joined these political ideas in such a way that they have tended to be hard to disentangle, which has made the concept equally enticing to both the right and the left in the United States and therefore, perhaps, all the more enduring and powerful (ibid.: 218).

It becomes clear that, regarding American neoliberalism, the economy is of primary importance. There are a number of central elements Foucault assigns to this version of governmentality. Firstly, and this will sound familiar considering the earlier paragraphs on biopower, Foucault describes the idea of "human capital" as having been introduced by the American neoliberals. Human capital concerns the analysis of labour itself, not labour power as concerns Marx's analyses (ibid.: 220f.). The neoliberals, Foucault says, criticise the Marxist abstraction of the labourer through the mere analysis of his/her labour power, its relation to production mechanisms, exchange mechanisms, etc. (ibid.: 222). What they suggest instead is analysing the labourer as a human and individual actor in a grid of economic decision-making. This economic grid consists of scarce means and competing ends, as, for the neoliberals, "[e]conomics is the science of human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have mutually exclusive uses [...]" (Robbins 1945: 16). In the sense of this focus on the worker or individual, they are seen as being united with their skill as "the side [of the worker] through which the worker is a machine [...]" [But] the machine constituted by the worker's ability is not, as it were, sold from time to time on the labour market against a certain wage" (Foucault 2010: 224). Instead, the machine is the producer of the worker's earnings stream, which makes the aspect of economic production intrinsically linked to the individual worker, who is his or her own production machine. Foucault says "[...] this machine has a lifespan [...] and an ageing [...]" (ibid.: 224f.), which brings me back to my association with the concept of biopower above, as in this sense the bare life of the worker has been drawn into the economic calculation in the context of neoliberal analysis.

As we will see again below, what is important also is that idea of workers being seen as their own machines/production mechanisms (of income), “so that the worker himself [*sic!*] appears as a sort of *enterprise* for himself [*sic!*]” (ibid.: 225; my emphasis). Even the element of consumption is defined in a sense of individual and entrepreneurial production:

“The man [*sic!*] of consumption, insofar as he [*sic!*] consumes, is a producer. [...] he [*sic!*] produces his [*sic!*] own satisfaction. And we should think of consumption as an enterprise activity by which the individual, precisely on the basis of the capital he [*sic!*] has at his [*sic!*] disposal, will produce something that will be his [*sic!*] own satisfaction. Consequently, [...] all the sociological analyses [...] of mass consumption, of consumer society, and so forth, do not hold up and have no value in relation to an analysis of consumption in the neo-liberal terms of the activity of production.” (Foucault 2010: 226)

The last part of this quotation also exemplifies how all other forms of analysis, such as those of sociology or social psychology, are being ignored or devalued. Every aspect of the economic cycle is said to be explainable in purely rational economic terms, by means of analysing the individual (rational) actor’s behaviour and choices.

This leads to the next key element of this version of neoliberalism: a purist exclusion of any non-economic analytical instruments (sociological, anthropological, psychological), no matter which human phenomenon is being analysed. Parallel or proportionate to this is the inflation of applying economic instruments onto not just the economic cycle but (formerly) non-economic situations as well (ibid.: 248f.). Foucault calls this “the analysis of non-economic behavior through a grid of economic intelligibility” (ibid.).

As the final key aspect of American neoliberalism, this ‘economic grid’ is also being applied to those phenomena that are situated in the public sphere. “[The market becomes] a sort of permanent economic tribunal confronting government” (ibid.: 247), with liberalism’s *laissez-faire* principle having been overrun in an almost sardonic manner, and the market being the thing that oversees governmental action instead of the other way around.

If we compare the German and the American versions of neoliberalism, we could say that aside from all the distinctions, they share giving primacy to the economic sphere and economic phenomena and knowledge. They also agree on a mutual adversary in this regard, vilifying “state-controlled economy, planning, and state interventionism on [...] those overall quantities to which Keynes attached such [...] importance” (ibid.: 79).

What is of interest now is whether neoliberal governmentality can be identified in parts of the world other than Europe and North America; a project Foucault did not himself engage in. The next part of this article, therefore, will be a critical discussion of anthropological papers that have attempted to analyse current politico-economic situations in non-Western contexts according to their relation to neoliberal governmentality, especially of those dealing with the PRC.

Anthropological Standpoints

Several anthropologists have taken up the task of describing and categorizing the advances to neoliberalism used within their discipline. Hilgers (2010) and Ferguson (2009) seem to agree more or less consistently in distinguishing three general approaches in this regard. According to these two authors there are those anthropologists who attempt a “culturalist approach” (Hilgers 2010: 352), who see and treat Neoliberalism (with a capital N) as an ideological

doctrine and politico-cultural project (Ferguson 2009: 170f.; Hilgers 2010: 352). Notably referenced among these are Jean and John Comaroff, in particular their work on “Millennial Capitalism” (2000), which seeks to demonstrate the existence of a global Neoliberal culture (cf. Comaroff/Comaroff 2000: 304; Hilgers 2010: 352ff.). The second category shares certain overlaps with the first and is described by Hilgers (2010: 352) as the “systemic approach”. It builds up on other systems and dependency theories, dividing the human world into spheres according to a hierarchy of (mostly politico-economic) power, the dominant sphere being made up of the Western “centre”, as opposed to the “periphery” which it exploits for its capitalist purposes and on which it imposes its every economic desire (Young 2001: 15ff.). The periphery is made up of what used to be called “Third World” countries. Adopting this logic and its Marxist point of departure, the systemic approach to neoliberalism, too, is characterised by the idea of aggressive diffusion of Western concepts and its imposition on, basically, the rest of the world (cf. Hilgers 2010: 355ff.; Ferguson 2009: 171). A systemic view also presumes a global structure of complex interconnections, where all geographical areas are necessarily connected through a power matrix.

Whilst I tend to think that these two approaches do include interesting and valuable points, my focus is on the third theoretical cluster, described by Hilgers and Ferguson as being one of the dominant anthropological advances to neoliberalism today: the “approach through governmentality” (Hilgers 2010: 352). Nikolas Rose (1999, Rose et al. 2006, etc.), James Ferguson himself (Ferguson/Gupta 2005, Ferguson 2009, etc.), Aihwa Ong (Ong/Collier 2005, Ong 2006, etc.), and many others seem to favour this set of analytical devices whose Foucauldian origins have been thoroughly introduced above. I will now attempt to provide some insight into certain anthropological studies and their theoretical attempts on neoliberal governmentality, including information on case studies that have been used to argue their governmentality point.

With the term neoliberalism generally being applied in a large variety of (often contending) ways, several anthropologists suggest providing a list of characteristics used most frequently as a common denominator among texts within their own discipline (cf. Ferguson 2009: 170; Hilgers 2010: 352). According to Hilgers, among these characteristics of neoliberalism are: a basic ideology of

“deregulation and the restriction of state intervention, and [...] an opposition to collectivism, a new role for the state, an extreme emphasis on individual responsibility, flexibility, a belief that growth leads to development, and a promotion of freedom as a means to self-realisation that disregards any questioning of the economic and social conditions that make such freedom possible.” (Hilgers 2010: 352)

The “opposition to collectivism” can be depicted as working simultaneously to the oft-described “responsibilization” practices, which shift the emphasis of societal role and obligation to the rationally operating individual, still conceived of as *Homo Economicus* (cf. Lemke 2000: 12; Read 2009: 27f.). Further illustrations of the varying discussions of neoliberalism include describing what distinguishes it from (classical) liberalism. According to Ferguson “[l]iberalism [...] was always about finding the right balance between two spheres understood as properly distinct, if always related: state and market, public and private, the realm of the king and the proper domain of the merchant” (Ferguson 2009: 172).

Neoliberalism, on the other hand, no longer subscribed to this clear distinction, instead giving primacy to the “domain of the merchant” through appropriating the logic of the market for a plethora of state functions (ibid.: 172). Complementarily, Cotoi (2011: 114) parallels the

replacement of liberalism by neoliberalism with the substitution of the logic of exchange with the logic of competition, with, in the words of Ferguson, “even core functions of the state [...] [being run] ‘like a business’” (Ferguson 2009: 172), implying the adoption of a market rationale.

James Ferguson and Neoliberal Welfare in African Contexts

Looking at those anthropologists who specifically apply Foucauldian concepts to the study of neoliberalism, I would like to begin with some of the cases and phenomena James Ferguson sees as characteristic for a neoliberal presence and deals with in order to analyse it in non-European contexts. Ferguson, a scholar in anthropology and African studies, with a special interest in post-colonial contexts, openly deals with political implications as a self-declared Left progressive (ibid.: 167, cf. also 174, etc.). In his 2009 text, he undertakes a critical analysis of “the Left’s” handling of neoliberalism. He acknowledges shortcomings at providing alternatives through “developing genuinely progressive arts of government” (ibid.: 167), and disapproves of what he describes as a lack of perspective and productive criticism on the part of the progressives in their critiques (ibid.: 166f.). Ferguson goes on to set an example by analysing neoliberal practices themselves for potentially useful elements that might be adopted by the left, rather than joining in with what he calls, “the antis” (ibid.: 166) who offer no more than destructive criticism. In his positive stance “social technologies need not have any essential or eternal loyalty to the political formations within which they were first developed” (ibid.: 182). Neoliberalism here is examined in regard to its relationship to the question of welfare and social policy. It can be said that neoliberal governmentality is often characterised as incompatible or opposed to ideas of social welfare, a statement in concordance with Hilgers’ (2010: 352) above list of alleged neoliberal characteristics, such as “the restriction of state intervention”. Ferguson, however, talks about two concrete case studies that seem to hint at a reality more complex than that.

Firstly, he introduces the debate in South Africa on a Basic Income Grant (BIG). Secondly, he discusses hunger relief programmes in certain African countries that use money transfers and payouts as replacement for earlier, apparently minimally efficient, food distribution programmes (Ferguson 2009: 175ff.). Both examples revolve around the neoliberal element of individual responsabilization and its market-based ideal of making singular citizens into one-person enterprises. In this sense, the BIG would be a relatively basic amount of money paid out to every single citizen in South Africa, no matter their financial status, which would ideally provide a sense of equality and erase the stigma around those who have been receiving welfare as part of the regular social state policies. For those with already high incomes, the grant would mean no more than a blip that would eventually fall victim to tax subtraction in any case (playing also into the hands of the traditional idea of tax redistribution) (ibid.: 175). Besides psychological encouragements, another benefit of the programme cited by its proponents is a reduction in bureaucracy, via which the eligibility of a person for social support had to be investigated. Especially with unemployment numbers as high as they apparently are in South Africa, the programme would relieve those individuals who were currently serving as breadwinners or persons responsible for their unemployed relatives. It would in turn liberate them in their roles as entrepreneurs, alleviating them from their economic and emotional baggage (ibid.: 177). “In this way,” Ferguson (ibid.: 177) notes, “the BIG would provide not a ‘safety net’ (the circus image of old-style welfare as protection against hazards) but a ‘springboard’ – a facilitator of risky (but presumably empowering) neoliberal flight.” According to this logic, the BIG would act as a catalyst for those who are already active in the economic cycle, while maintaining the standards of those who remain as yet excluded.

As for the hunger and famine relief programmes, some of which are already in practice, it is argued that providing monetary means instead of food to individuals will similarly encourage entrepreneurization. This would make it possible for persons themselves to decide what to spend the money on; which part of the money to use for food, while making independent decisions on whether to save some of it for education purposes and so on. Another important factor promoting such “Cash Transfer Schemes” (ibid.: 179), is the fact that local agriculture will be boosted, since the food being distributed in classic hunger relief schemes is imported, mainly from the US. This, according to the programmes, harms regional farmers, cutting any non-subsistent attempts at entrepreneurialism off before they can even begin to develop. Cash hand-outs will provide an end to these unhealthy import mechanisms and be good for regional (and subsequently national) business and “development” (ibid.).

Both programmes understand themselves to be fighting paternalistic practices, either on the side of the national governments or on an international scale; a statement typical for neoliberal ideas in a Thatcherist tradition. The programmes are compatible, in particular, with my previous examination of American neoliberalism: the transformation of liberal notions of laissez-faire (which were certainly carried to an extreme in many African contexts) into neoliberal ideas informing governmental action. For it seems that the money being distributed, at least in the case of the Basic Income Grant, would be coming from state sources instead of private funds or the like.

If we remember that Foucault talked about different versions of neoliberalism, Ferguson’s text proposes a challenge to a singular homogeneous neoliberal governmentality that follows a pure doctrine as suggested by many culturalist and systemic anthropologists. Ferguson demonstrates that there are numerous different compendiums of neoliberal governmentality. The BIG and food programme case studies he uses are examples that show apparently new components of it: neoliberal technologies that converge with questions of social welfare, which formerly seem to have been reserved exclusively to leftist techniques of governing. Additionally, Ferguson characterises an idiosyncratically African neoliberalism representing post-colonial contexts subjected to IMF and World Bank programmes.

It should be added in connection to this that the neoliberal welfare ideas that are proposed (and in some measure already being implemented [ibid.: 179]) seem for a large part to be only trying to fix problems now that were created by a neoliberal logic in the first place: Mathieu Hilgers’ quotation above speaks of “deregulation” and “a belief that growth leads to development” as characteristics of neoliberalism, features, also, of a distinctively African neoliberalism Ferguson describes: “Here, neoliberalism has meant first of all the policy measures that were forced on African states in the 1980s by banks and international lending agencies, under the name of ‘structural adjustment’” (ibid.: 172).

Whether post-colonial states and societies would have been better off as they were, without the introduction of (neo-)liberal measures as the dominant paradigm in the context of ‘Development’ is another question. Ferguson is bound to be correct, however, in doubting that the right answer to some of the detrimental effects of structural adjustment could be the reversal of time and the politico-economic changes that came along. Even if it were possible to simply return to a pre-neoliberal era, he states, the desirability to conjure up the post-colonial states of the 1970s seems questionable (ibid.: 169). This is not to say that Ferguson deals with the proposed neoliberal welfare programmes in an uncritical fashion. In fact, he criticises the Basic Income Grant in South Africa for its potentially pernicious effects on a relatively large group of individuals. According to him, only those entitled “citizens” will receive the BIG, while “many of the poorest are not citizens” (ibid.: 182). This would undoubtedly only enlarge a problem of divisions and discriminations apparently already in

existence (ibid.: 181f.). These effects are reminiscent of old criticisms of capitalism: Rosa Luxemburg's theory on the accumulation of capital describes the ever-continuous need of capitalism for accrual, according to the logic of a paradigm of progress and development. As a necessity, non-capitalist societies need to be relied upon for exploitation, and a kind of outsourcing of intra-societal hardships, in order to ensure ongoing accumulation after personal resources have been used up (cf. Mies 2002: 164f.). Luxemburg writes: „Wir sehen jedoch, daß der Kapitalismus auch in seiner vollen Reife in jeder Beziehung auf die gleichzeitige Existenz nichtkapitalistischer Schichten und Gesellschaften angewiesen ist“ (URL 1).

Whilst bearing in mind that capitalism and neoliberalism are not one and the same phenomenon, the concept here of a certain excluded group being relied upon to a large extent to cover for the benefit of those included is comparable; the exclusion of “non-citizens” in South Africa from the BIG in order to achieve the avoidance of bureaucracy and a straightforward application of a simple programme of welfare for those who are entitled “citizens”.

The very question of citizenship, inclusion and exclusion is something Aihwa Ong has paid extensive attention to in connection with neoliberal governmentality. The next few pages will deal with these aspects of her work.

Aihwa Ong, Neoliberalism, Exceptions, and Citizenship in Asian Contexts

One of the phenomena used as a potential marker for neoliberal governmentality is the concept of citizenship in connection with biopower and the biopolitical aspect discussed earlier as Foucauldian aspects of analysis. Aihwa Ong is one of the major scholars dealing with this idea in relation to neoliberalism in Asian contexts, which she examines notably, in her 2006 monograph “Neoliberalism as Exception—Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty”.

Citizenship was once seen as being determined by political criteria and state policies only. Now, elements of market logic, such as economic status through entrepreneurial value and knowledge/expertise, also provide persons with their respective degrees of power and corresponding societal status as citizens. Accordingly, a lack thereof will strip individuals of citizen status or it will not have been awarded in the first place. This citizen (non-)status is, according to Ong, no longer tied to nation state territory (or, for that matter, nationality itself), but assigned in international contexts. In a positive sense, persons with expertise seen as the right kind within this logic may gain transnational mobility and be actively recruited to so-described ecosystemic hubs (2006: 7f.). Their knowledge-power opens up flexibility in citizenship for whichever hub they are seen as favourably skilled. On the other hand, the negative outcome of these mechanisms can be exemplified by persons who are excluded, such as the floating population of China or persons (mainly) from Southeast Asia coming to Hong Kong for domestic work (ibid.: 207, see also 106, 186, et al.; Greenhalgh/Winckler 2005: 178). The former are individuals who are not listed in the so-called household register, the census data in the PRC, or only locally and/or temporarily (cf. Greenhalgh/Winckler 2005: 278; Gransow 2002: 54). Greenhalgh and Winckler (2005: 278) state that “[t]hose outside the registration regime have remained [...] illegal persons denied access to the social benefits of citizenship.” The inclusion or exclusion from this system is now also being determined by a person's place in the structure of neoliberal knowledge-power, their degree of education accorded to a logic of scientism.¹ The latter example of domestic helpers in Hong

¹ Although the one-child policy is an important aspect in this regard, it has to be excluded here for reasons of scope (for more information on the subject see Greenhalgh/Winckler 2005: 276-280).

Kong shows the complexity of citizenship issues: although a globalizing world has meant greater geographical mobility, not only for those highly privileged, inclusion into the citizenship status need not be automatically attributed to being part of an ethnoscape. The exclusion from being citizens can be seen by an apparently lowered status in juridical-legal aspects and discriminatory treatment by authorities. For domestic helpers in Hong Kong, there are everyday examples like queues at airport controls separate from those for other immigrants, just as there is official legislation which denies these individuals the right to apply for residency in Hong Kong (Ong 2006: 5; URL 3). But even their basic human rights have been subject to violation by employers in few though similar cases, with the term “neoslavery” having arisen as a result (Ong 2006: 196, see also 203, 208 et al.). Since Ong emphasizes biopolitical factors as characterizing neoliberal citizenship, these attacks on bare life where the women in question were repeatedly abused by employers for periods of time, provide a gruesome example (ibid.: 196). Other factors of a biopolitical nature are the issue of racism involved in the degradation of these Southeast Asian individuals in said East Asian contexts (ibid.: 206f.).

While questions of citizenship are provided particular attention in this regard, Ong also deals more broadly with the ideas of inclusion and exclusion. She uses the term of exception(s) and examines it in connection to neoliberalism. Ong’s first concept of “exceptions to neoliberalism” consists of those parts of a population that are excluded from “neoliberal considerations”, unable to fit into its spheres of neoliberal veridiction. This way the included parts may enjoy “the benefits of capitalist development” (Ong 2006: 4) on the backs of those who are not. If we understand these excluded parts of a population as representing those elements of society who are as yet waiting to experience the famous “trickle down” (Beder 2009: 1) effect of neoliberal prosperity, the following argument by Thomas Lemke is worth remembering: “[n]eoliberalism might work not instead of social exclusion and marginalisation processes or political ‘deficiencies’; on the contrary, relinquishing social securities and political rights might well prove to be its *raison d’être*” (Lemke 2000: 10).

Again, Rosa Luxemburg’s theoretical advances and her above quotation come to mind, connecting certain neoliberal technologies of governing to those of classical capitalism (see p. 12). We can remember, to provide an example, the above-mentioned case of China’s floating population who is also excluded from acquiring affluence in the sense that it is forbidden to settle in the more prosperous urban areas (cf. Greenhalgh/Winckler 2005: 42).

Corresponding to this is Ong’s idea of “neoliberalism as exception”, which is to be found in those non-Western contexts “where neoliberalism itself is not the general characteristic of technologies of governing” (Ong 2006: 3) but somehow present all the same. Many non-Western politicians and governments are described as being wary of American neoliberalism, which they see as aggressive and synonymous with policies of such entities as the IMF (ibid.: 1). In order to protect national and regional economies from such intrusive neoliberal mechanisms, these predominantly Asian and Latin American societies refuse to fully embrace what they see as American neoliberalism. At the same time, several Asian countries in particular have seen a surge in overall economic performance. Being able to display such success at global competition, Ong seems to say, has been due to only selectively adopting certain technologies of neoliberal governing (ibid.). She uses as illustration amongst other things the construction of urban economic hubs, described by Saskia Sassen (1993) as “Global Cities” and Special Administrative Regions (SARs) or Special Economic Zones (SEZs) (cf. also Ong 2006: 18f.). While said cities are to be found in several East Asian and South East Asian contexts, the existence of SARs and SEZs is a phenomenon intrinsic to the People’s Republic of China. As for the latter, PRC governmentality has been connected with Socialism since Mao’s acquisition of power in 1949. Voices of scholars arguing for a

neoliberal governmentality in the PRC have, however, been growing louder and more numerous. It is this situation and its apparently contradictory nature that make China an interesting subject when it comes to analysing neoliberal governmentality and, through it, a potential source for distinct realization.

The Special Case of the People's Republic of China

Many phenomena are emphasized when trying to illustrate the existence or non-existence of neoliberalism in China: Greenhalgh and Winckler, who also use a governmentality approach to determine the situation in the PRC, concentrate on the rationalities and practices of population governance, which they see as “a central object of power in China” (2005: 1) and therefore as a worthy indicator-to-be. In combination with this, the question of population “quality” is examined for its role in allegedly affirming neoliberalism’s existence and is described as defining the latest phase in the PRC’s population-and-reproduction policy (cf. Greenhalgh/Winckler 2005: 1, see also 43f., et al.). Kipnis deals explicitly with this “quality” aspect in a number of papers and in a more critical manner (cf. 2006, 2007, 2008). He analyses and works with the Chinese concept of “suzhi”, whose frequent translation into human “quality” he criticises, but apparently for want of a more fitting translation, he nevertheless continues to use it (cf. Kipnis 2006: 295; 2007: 384ff.).² Kipnis’s analysis of the concept occurs for much the same reason as Greenhalgh and Winckler’s, as a possible indicator for a neoliberal China, though with adverse outcome. An unflinching denial of a neoliberal governmentality in the PRC is provided by Nonini (2008). Contrary to most others in his field, he approaches the question mainly in a more traditional “political economy”-fashion, using macro level processes as illustrations for rebutting the existence of neoliberalism in the PRC. In opposition to Foucault and others, he insists here on retaining a distinction between the two universals of “state affairs” and “capitalist enterprise”.

I am now going to provide an introduction into the Chinese situation, in order to ensure some clarity when discussing the actual question of a Chinese neoliberal governmentality: During the era of Deng Xiaoping, which began shortly after Mao’s death at the end of the 1970s and continued through the early 1990s, the PRC was opened to the market with economic and social reform (Greenhalgh/Winckler 2005: 8). Fittingly dubbed “Reformism”, the corresponding governance approach attempted to deliver China into the age of modernity, and is characterized by the policy tendency of “Socialist Marketization” (ibid.: 39ff.). The recently introduced liberalization mechanisms and the parallel retainment of socialist values practised from 1949 onwards, have been characterised as “in tension with each other” (ibid.: 33). This tension represents the main reason why it seems so difficult to attach a certain terminology to the PRC’s current governmentality approach. On these grounds it is necessary to take a closer look in order to find out what it is that *can* be said about contemporary Chinese technologies of government and whether or not neoliberalism is indeed its current eponym.

Greenhalgh and Winckler (2005: 33) describe illustratively the characteristic population policy approaches of the different PRC eras: the overall population governance approach is described as Leninist, more specifically “Chinese Leninism”. As can be seen from the title of their monograph, the authors’ main purpose is to analyse what they perceive as the shift in population governance “from Leninist to Neoliberal Biopolitics”.

² Yan (2003: 494), on the other hand, in her paper on Suzhi and “Labor Recruitment Networks in China”, resorts to translating this complex concept into “value” or “value flow”.

They present the reader with a concise genealogy of what they call “Alternative Projects” within the traditionally predominant Leninist governmentality since the PRC’s establishment in 1949 (cf. Greenhalgh/Winckler 2005: 7ff., see also 33-41). These projects are (in chronological order) “Maoism”, “Stalinism” and “Reformism” and are respectively presented by Greenhalgh and Winckler, illustrating their characteristic policy-dyads. “Stalinism”, for instance, is typified by “Bureaucratic Professionalism”, a style of governance coined by strategies of planning, economic as well as more generally, adopted from Soviet governmentality (ibid.). The subsequent shift to “Reformism” with its “Socialist Marketization” is distinguished by an overall transition from practices of direct planning to practices of more indirect regulation (ibid.: 23, see also 25 and 39). Additionally, there has been a move towards positive methods of population regulation, as characterised by this quote referring to birth planning: “[...] the [birth planning] program did not renounce educational propaganda and administrative coercion, but wished to supplement them with economic incentives” (ibid.: 142).

This example also illustrates the concurrency in PRC population governance (and perhaps more generally as well), with its retention of typically socialist methods of intervention and a parallel rise in following private sector practices.

China’s population-and-reproduction policy since 1949 is seen by Greenhalgh and Winckler (ibid.: 1) as central to Chinese politics. The policy’s respective objects for manipulation according to political era can be designated as “location”, “quantity”, and “quality”. None of them have followed the other in a simple linear subsequence, rather through transitional periods and shifts in emphasis instead of seamless replacement (ibid.: 2, see also 169). The question of location presented the earliest object of PRC biopolitics, with socio-economic divisions and differences between rural and urban areas, and a rise in urbanisation. In connection to this stand Ong’s “exceptions to neoliberalism”, with rural Chinese having (had) to suffer socio-economic disadvantages due to exclusory mechanisms. This is illustrated by Greenhalgh and Winckler, who point out that “the ‘modern, low quantity, high quality’ urban populace has been constituted in opposition to the ‘backward, high quantity, low quality’ peasant population” (ibid.: 42). China’s (in)famous policy of lowering the population’s quantity, which had already started to be anticipated during his lifetime, was taken into immediate focus following Mao’s death: “Post-Mao leaders gave limiting reproduction a central and urgent place in China’s new program of national reform and global ascent” (ibid.: 2). The timespan that can be allocated to “quantity” as a prevailing concept is situated approximately from 1970 to 2000 (ibid.: 42). Meanwhile “[p]reoccupation with population *quality* grew during the 1990s and should grow even more during the 2000s in both state and society” (ibid.: 43; my emphasis), initially with a shift in emphasis towards quality aspects “such as distorted sex ratios, accelerated aging, and the resulting need for old-age [social] support” (ibid.). Perhaps particularly important concerning the quality aspect, with respect to Hilgers’ neoliberal characteristics, is the authors’ description of “[f]ar-reaching changes in Chinese society and its aspirations for the young [...] having fueled an intense popular interest in nurturing a new generation of ‘superior’ children equipped to compete in the modern world” (ibid.: 43f.). As can be seen very clearly, the concept of biopower is of primary importance when talking about Chinese governmentality. Both biopolitics as well as discipline are of major concern: the quality aspect in connection with prioritizing education of a new generation of children shows the availability of neoliberal practices for achieving and culminating “human capital”. Foucault’s characterization of human capital theories becomes apparent here: one characteristic of the American version of neoliberalism is, as we have seen above, the analysis of the labourer as an individual rational human being, allocating means to ends on an individual basis. “[F]or the neo-liberals, economic analysis should [...] consist [...] [in] the study and analysis of the way in which scarce means are allocated to competing ends,

that is to say, to alternative ends which cannot be superimposed on each other” (Foucault 2010: 222).

In connection to this, we may consider the fact of a high quantity population in China (despite the efficiency of biopower mechanisms targeting the problem): the relatively high number of human individuals alludes, according to a logic of neoliberalism, to scarcer means and even more competition when it comes to their allocation to certain ends. I have noted the emphasis in the PRC on quality acquisition concerning the education of children within a reasoning of scientism. Although in no way limited to mere schooling, Foucault talks of educational investment as a means for accumulating human capital (*ibid.*: 228). Education of children can be seen here as the means allocated to the end of accruing human capital. As seen above, the responsabilization of the individual is one of the major notions used for specifying neoliberal governmentality (Hilgers 2010: 2, see also 6 and 352; Ferguson 2009: 172f.). Furthermore, Greenhalgh and Winckler (2005: 24) state that “[i]n the population domain, [...] [an] accelerating downward shift in the locus of power resulted in part from regime success at building professional institutions to instil in individuals a new norm of fewer but higher-quality children.”³

The regulations of the quality issue, however, are operating on several levels: beside the micro-level of individuals’ ambitions to equip their children with the skills to function successfully in a competitive world of market primacy, the macro-level of the state as well as the meso-level of health and education systems are arbiters of PRC biopower.

In connection to power division onto different levels and spheres stands the introduction of market mechanisms in some areas. Non-state actors of the private sphere, such as national and international companies, have gained importance (*ibid.*: 44). Yan (2003), in addition, talks about the organization of “Suzhi/Value Flow” in the form of “Labor Recruitment Networks”. These recruitment networks are made up of institutions that are state/private hybrids (2003: 494). Greenhalgh and Winckler also describe these “trends in [Chinese] society [...] [as having been] stimulated by broader regime policies toward economic and social development, in particular those spurring the emergence of the market” (2005: 24). All of these elements are representative, more or less straightforwardly, of the “Marketization” aspect in the “Reformism” policy-dyad of “Socialist Marketization” mentioned above.

I discussed earlier the tension within the “Reformism” policy-dyad, and the difficulties it creates to come to simple and straightforward conclusions about China’s overall governmentality. Bearing in mind that a new era of leadership began in March of this year (2013), Greenhalgh and Winckler come to the following conclusions in the final chapter of their 2005 analysis of PRC population governance:

“[...] the Hu Jintao era is shifting toward neoliberal policy instruments, devolving functions to local society and strengthening indirect state regulation. Continuing its Leninist vanguard role, the party has chosen to lead the establishment of neoliberalism in China, by promoting institutions for disciplining society and by instilling attitudes of personal responsibility. In the early 2000s China’s biopolitics is in transition from Leninism to neoliberalism. From the regime’s point of view, the making of policy remains largely Leninist; from society’s point of view, life is becoming increasingly neoliberal.” (Greenhalgh/Winckler 2005: 312f.)

³ I would like to annotate here that I find Greenhalgh and Winckler’s apparently imprudent use of the word “quality” as referring to population – an aggregation of human individuals – problematic.

If we look at Donald Nonini's 2008 critique of neoliberal reifications, we can compare to this statement his concluding words and analyse their arguments. Nonini (2008: 1) denies a neo-liberalization of China and offers instead the concept of an "oligarchic corporate state and Party" having been established. He describes this as a group that shows "hybrid subjectivities within which the logics of market socialism and predatory post-Maoist party rule are closely intertwined, and set the standard for how people are to conduct themselves given the blurred boundary" (ibid.: 161). In this respect he describes the "blurring of the distinction between what is state and public, and what is market and private" (ibid.). This is quite reminiscent of Ferguson's differentiation between liberalism and neoliberalism. It also creates a confusing image within Nonini's line of arguing, since in another sentence he attempts the delicate task of defining what it is that characterizes a "neoliberal social order", namely, "the implication that capitalist enterprise has the power to intervene in state affairs" (ibid.: 165). In opposition to Foucault and others then, he insists here on retaining a distinction between the two universals of "state affairs" and "capitalist enterprise" with the latter penetrating the first. This act of infiltration, instead of appropriation or even supervision, implies to me two distinctive phenomena. At the same time Nonini has argued that the lines between the two have been blurring within CPC party cadres, who, according to him, "sought under liberalization to form guanxi⁴ relationships with the new managers of [...] 'released' SOEs [State-Owned Enterprises], collective Township and Village Enterprises, and private firms – or even to become managers themselves" (ibid.). Nonini (ibid.: 159) generally insists that in China, socialist values are retaining dominance over privatization and liberalization, situating the power to rein them in as counter-indicative of a neoliberal order. Although he rightly contrasts providing the markets with a certain (low) degree of operational power against "allotting them the paramount role that neoliberal ideology exalts" (ibid.: 164), he makes this oppositional pair restrict his whole analysis to a yes-or-no question. Now, although he is generally arguing for "variant forms" (ibid.: 147) of neoliberalisms having manifested, he is strongly opposed to a terminology of China as a "neoliberal economy [...] 'with Chinese characteristics'" (Harvey 2005: 144, cit. by ibid.: 162f.). He resorts instead to assign a minor role to the presence of neoliberal elements in China. In connection to this, I questioned in my introduction the stage at which a state-societal entity becomes "neoliberal". Whether there is a point at all that may be reached in order for such an entity to "turn" neoliberal in nature. These questions are clearly simplifying a much more complex issue. My introductory questions called for answers that would necessarily have to subscribe to a logic of polarization; a logic which I feel Nonini's text keeps resorting to, due to basically ignoring the methodology of the governmentality approach. If we return to Foucault's analysis of neoliberalism, we can recall his attempts at dissolving universal concepts. Gordon's analysis of Foucault's work on neoliberalism provides us with particularly useful information on how Foucault distinguished between versions of neoliberalism depending on their respective context. A concise distinction between the American and the West German version is provided by the following quotation: "Whereas the West Germans propound a government of the social conducted in the name of the economic, the more adventurous among the Americans [...] propose a global redescription of the social as a form of the economic" (Gordon 1991: 42f.).

For the former, the state is the one to "conduct a policy towards society such that it is possible for a market to exist and function" (ibid.: 41). The pivotal role is carried out by the state. However, it has to do so in the best interest of the market. This is obviously different from the principle of least government or the idea that "[e]conomics [...] [is] an 'approach' capable [...] of envisaging a coherent, purely economic method of programming the totality of govern-

⁴ See this article for an introduction to the concept of guanxi, a phenomenon related in meaning to the idea of relationship grooming and/or favouritism, etc.: URL 4.

mental action” (ibid.: 43; cf. Cotoi 2011: 112). Still, as we have seen extensively above, ordoliberalism is a version of neoliberalism.

In my opinion, Chinese governmentality shares parallels with this West German model: its initial top-down practices which, intentionally or not, make way for a more decentralised conduct amongst a social order. Also the fact that the market has not replaced the state but state policies are carried out to serve the economy according to a logic which argues that economic “development” is to be treated as the primary objective in an attempt to exceed at performing globally. Greenhalgh and Winckler’s (2005) analyses in combination with Aihwa Ong’s (2006) references to Chinese contexts (including Hong Kong), show that we do not have to choose between an “either or” of neoliberalism vs. socialism. The PRC is a possible candidate for using “neoliberalism as exception”, considering the fact of a far-reaching retention of socialist mechanisms in certain areas, parallel to all those phenomena Greenhalgh and Winckler (2005) have described as undoubtedly neoliberal.

Conclusion

It can be said that Foucault’s concept of governmentality has been providing the basis for a variety of anthropologists analysing socio-political and politico-economic phenomena. The aspect of power fragmentation, from an exclusive state-level onto macro-, as well as meso- and micro-levels is of great importance to Foucault and those dealing with his ideas (see pp. 4-5). Micro-level individual human actors are playing an unprecedented role, in connection also to his concept of biopower, which is divided up into biopolitics and discipline: the targeting of human life as individual and collective bodies (see pp. 5-8). Neoliberal governmentality is characterised in this regard as various arts of government, notably a West German and an American one. The latter is connected to analysing the rational behaviour of the labourer, theories of individuals trying to accumulate human capital by rationally allocating means to ends, such as education to children. While Foucault characterises the American version of neoliberalism with an inflation of economic analysis onto non-economic phenomena and, correspondingly, the devaluing of analyses outside of economics, the West German model of neoliberalism is distinguished by a different approach to giving primacy to economic phenomena. Here, state-level institutions are not passively infiltrated or devalued by an economic sphere claiming all other forms of logic. Instead state-level decisions are made on the very basis of allocating economic issues the most importance and of actively building other socio-political appearances around the primacy of the economic (see pp. 6-8).

After an exploration into Foucauldian terminology, many of the governmentality authors discussed provide examinations with persuasive reasoning, based on skilled theoretical analyses and supported by interesting background information (see pp. 9-18). Although most papers managed to convince of several singular arguments, some elements had an estranging effect on me by presenting neoliberalism as a black-or-white possibility. Greenhalgh and Winckler (2005), who provide extensive information on post-1949 PRC biopower, notably biopolitics, and the surrounding socio-political framework, are convinced of neoliberalism’s existence (or soon-to-be dominance) in China to the extent that hardly any discussion is provided to doubtful viewpoints. They emphasize the role of quality in the realm of responsabilization of the individual and in the sense of raising quality children of great human capital (see pp. 14-16). Nonini (2008), on the other hand notably disagrees with what he sees as anthropologists’ hyperbolic exaggeration of neoliberalism’s contemporary role, eagerly denying it any position of importance within the PRC (see p. 17). In opposition to such polarized presentations, I have found Foucault’s analysis of West German ordoliberalism to be

a necessary supplement to all those discussions of neoliberalism that only focus on the American version and its genealogy. Foucault provides models of analysis that are less polarising, leaving room for possibilities of reconciling dynamic concepts, such as different versions of neoliberalism, instead of dichotomizing black-and-white universals, which allow space for one particular form of neoliberalism only and exclude all those forms of governmentality that do not adhere to a certain rigid codex of characteristics (cf. Lemke 2000: 12, Gordon 1991: 6). Aihwa Ong's (2006) work on exceptions and neoliberalism is another approach in this line of arguing that perhaps makes a zero-sum game between neoliberal and other technologies of governmentality in a given milieu obsolete (see pp. 12-14). James Ferguson (2009) talks about programs of neoliberal welfare, notably in South Africa: a clear combination of neoliberal mechanisms and social measures (see pp. 10-12). Just as he describes cases of neoliberal technologies in connection to other arts of government in African contexts, the PRC too is characterized by a composition of different governing mechanisms. As I have mentioned in the first part of the text, Foucault (2010: 92) declares that socialism as such generally could not be realized in practice on its own. Subsequently Ferguson (2009: 170) concludes that neoliberalism too could not in reality exist in its "doctrinal", i.e. pure, form. Combinations rather than unmitigated forms of political philosophies are to be found in practical contexts, restricting their doctrinal versions to the realm of theory. Neoliberalism turns out to be not a singular and static entity, but a cluster-like form, made up, to a large extent, of variations depending on context and the respective historical predispositions. If we take leave of the idea of one form of neoliberalism, the question of diffusion vs. independent emergence becomes obsolete, too: from its very beginning in the post-WWII period, there was not just one version of neoliberalism, but several forms depending on context, with respectively different emphases. Those non-European contexts' versions of neoliberalism which I have discussed within the scope of this paper, have varied objects of emphasis, just as they combine and include elements not (traditionally) seen as neoliberal.

If we agree with the possibility of connecting various forms of political philosophy (such as socialism) to neoliberal governmentality or, the other way around, the ability of appropriating neoliberal technologies for Leftist ideas, a question of discursive power remains. Ferguson (2009: 182) noted that "social technologies need not have any essential or eternal loyalty to the political formations within which they were first developed." Future research needs to scrutinize whether the retention or appropriation of the term "neoliberal" allows for dynamism, or if this terminology is tinged to such an extent with certain connotations that its preservation will be counterproductive to novel theoretical analyses and political positionings.

In addition to these conclusions, I hope to have illustrated within the course of this paper that it is possible to undertake further research from an approach separate from dichotomizing models, and that in the quest for answers staying open-minded is both possible and indeed necessary.

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