

Power, resistance and social change

Conveners:

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In the “development” research, resistance is often elaborated as coming from “below” or as different, individual or collective, processes of empowerment. In 1985, James Scott made a significant contribution to the field, introducing the concept of ‘Everyday resistance’, in order to cover a kind of resistance that is not as dramatic and visible as rebellions, riots, demonstrations or revolutions. Instead, Scott showed how certain common practices of “subalterns” (for example, foot-dragging, escape, sarcasm, passivity, laziness, misunderstandings, disloyalty, slander, avoidance or theft) are tactics that exploited people use in order to both survive and undermine repressive domination; especially in contexts where rebellion is too risky.

With Foucault’s groundbreaking studies of power, the resistance concept has been broadened even further. If power is not only a sovereign center that is forbidding (and punishing) but also a productive multiple network of power techniques, then the face of resistance also changes. If the decentered powers produce regimes of truth/knowledge, specialized institutions of discipline, and ultimately the very subject that makes resistance, then the research on resistance must also address less visible practices of resistance that are enacted expressly outside political spaces and embrace entities such as texts, signs, symbols, identity and language. Here we have discursive resistance, which in “Development studies” have targeted and deconstructed concepts such as “The Third World”, the “Periphery” and “Third World Women”.

But resistance and “knowledge-making” are also relevant in regard to other areas and issues within “development studies”. This panel, will address resistance as/and knowledge-making and negotiations of meanings of local communities as well as within “development” spaces and agencies.

We welcome novel insights into rituals and resistance, linguistic resistance, negotiated participatory practices, the globalization of resistance, performative resistance, empowerment and agency as well as femmes, gender rebels and queer conjurers and how such practices/phenomenon/identity positions might (re)construct “Development studies”.