Examining Alternative Knowledge Production: Transnational alternative policy groups in the Global North and South

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Abstract — Transnational alternative policy groups (TAPGs) are alternative think tanks that mobilize knowledge into social movements and community action. These social movement actors may hold vast potential in correcting inequalities that have, arguably, been prominent during the recent wave of neoliberalism. However, the study of TAPGs is new and thus they are only recently emerging within academic literature. Here, the author contributes to literature on TAPGs, by comparing two TAPGs, from the Global North and South respectively, in order to explore their potential as social movement actors situated within a neoliberal hegemonic global system.

Keywords: Knowledge production; TAPGs; social movements; alternative knowledge; neoliberalism.

Résumé — Les Groupes Politiques Alternatifs Transnationaux (GPAT) sont des groupes de réflexion alternatifs qui mobilisent les connaissances dans des mouvements sociaux et actions communautaires. Ces acteurs de mouvements sociaux peuvent avoir un vaste potentiel dans la correction des inégalités qui ont, sans doute, été saillant lors de la vague récente de néolibéralisme. Toutefois, l'étude des GPAT est nouvelle et n'a donc fait son apparition que récemment dans la littérature universitaire. Ici, l'auteure contribue à la littérature sur les GPAT en comparant deux GPAT, l'un de l'hémisphère Nord et l'autre de l'hémisphère Sud, afin d'explorer leur potentiel en tant qu'acteurs de mouvements sociaux situés dans un système hégémonique néolibéral.

Mots-clés : Production de connaissances; GPAT; mouvements sociaux; connaissances alternatives; néolibéralisme

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Introduction

In *Postscript on the Societies of Control*, Gilles Deleuze spins a new take on the Foucauldian concept of the "disciplinary society.[1]" Deleuze states that, following the disciplinary society that existed pre-World War II, we are living in a "society of control." According to Deleuze, we are living in a society where our orientations towards control and freedom have functioned to create a new world of increased surveillance and "a widespread progressive introduction of a new system of domination" (Deleuze, 1992). Perhaps nowhere is that system of domination more strongly felt than within the current paradigm of neoliberal capitalism, one that is rigidly programmed and enforced through overarching institutions of global governance and economic globalization.

In this paper, I critically engage with the emergence of transnational alternative policy groups (TAPGs) — alternative think tanks that exist as actors within civil society to challenge unequal and hegemonic knowledge systems. This is done using critical theory to posit that, neoliberal capitalism, a breed of capitalism that has become entrenched within global governance since the economic crisis of the 1970s, is a hegemonic social imaginary, with TAPGs producing a counter-hegemonic imaginary. I therefore identify how TAPGs are situated within broader, longstanding struggles of global justice, which are often organized around a dialectic of "hegemonic initiatives from above and counter-hegemonic agency from below" (Cox & Nilsen, 2014). I focus on two TAPGs, the International Forum on Globalization (IFG) and Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), which are situated in the United States and India, respectively. Through comparing these groups' production of alternative knowledge, I examine how TAPGs are countering the programmed seduction of neoliberal capitalist ideology.

This paper is divided into seven sections. In section 1, I theoretically explore the processes of knowledge production. Section 2 discusses how neoliberal capitalism is entrenched as a hegemonic social imaginary. In section 3, I discuss the organisational framework and emergence contexts of IFG and PRIA. In sections 4 and 5, I analyze one IFG and one PRIA program, followed by some overall comparisons in section 6, with section 7 concluding the paper. Overall, it is found that although TAPGs within the Global North and South are each positioning themselves to produce counter-hegemonic imaginaries to neoliberal capitalism, they must find ways to evolve within the current paradigm of economic globalization in order to catalyse a political shift.

Processes of Knowledge Production

In his 1981 paper, *New Social Movements,* Habermas theorized that, although the social movements emerging out of Europe in the 1960s appeared unique at the time, "these new movements were to be viewed as largely "defensive" reactions to economic and political interference in everyday life… a colonisation of the 'lifeworld'" (Edwards, 2009). For Habermas, this colonization of individual livelihoods, in the course of capitalist modernization, necessitated a new kind of social movement in response to such growing inequalities. From Habermas' writings, we learn that social movement knowledge has been found to be a vital component of emancipatory politics. The writings of Habermas, in this light, could seen as a critical theory approach to the processes of knowledge production. Critical theory has, since its inception, had a revolutionary mindset — Max Horkheimer, arguably one of the first critical theorists, and heavily influenced by the writings of Marx, argued that the "capitalist form of commodity production….had ultimately become an obstacle to human progress and was driving human kind towards a new barbarism" (Wellmer, 2014). Indeed, what distinguishes critical theory from traditional forms of social theory is that "critical theory conceives of itself as par and parcel of a struggle for an association of liberated human beings" (ibid.). The real possibility of such an association rests the necessity of a struggle.

This is where knowledge production becomes of high calibre. My main argument within this paper is that TAPGs are oriented towards producing knowledge. As such, they may hold incredible potential in producing the visions and policies necessary to signal a political shift. The critique and mobilization of instrumental reason has been seen, by many scholars, as a decisive element for the diagnosis of society. Robert Cox is particularly lauded for his contributions in theorizing knowledge processes. Cox emphasized that civilizations produce "collective

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[1]   In his book, *Discipline and* Punish, Foucault states that discipline is a mechanism of power that regulates the behaviour of individuals through complex systems of surveillance. The term "disciplinary society" refers to the origins of disciplinary institutions like schools and prisons.

understandings, an entrenched 'common sense' in the Gramscian usage of fragmented values and beliefs that conform to a given social order" (Mittleman, 2016). His ideas elucidate the term "global governance" by theorizing how knowledge is created and contested in the global political economy (ibid.).

Stephen Gill enters this dialogue by positioning the role of neoliberalism as a hegemony to knowledge production. According to Stephen Gill, power is "complicated, dense, and pervasive." It cannot simply be posed in terms of legislation and constitution. Gill finds that the "system of power" takes more of a *pyramid* form, especially when speaking to the "neoliberalization of truths" (Gill, 1995). The neoliberalization of truths refers to how the programming of legitimized truthes has major implications to the world we live in today. For scholars like Ken Booth, sovereignty is disintegrating: "States are less able to perform their traditional functions [and] global factors increasingly impinge on all decisions made by governments" (cited in Lipschutz, 1992).

As I will show in further sections, these changes are largely the result of neoliberal capitalist ideology entrenched at the global level. Resulting from these changes, what we are increasingly seeing is the growing presence of a global civil society, which comprises of TAPGs like IFG and PRIA (Kadirbeyoglu et al., 2017). Especially in developing countries, governments are offloading responsibility to civil society organizations, or civil society organizations are emerging because of delivery gaps within national governments.

The Neoliberalization of Knowledge Production

The free-market ideologies of neoliberal capitalism have been incredibly pervasive within the international arena, often as the dominant rationalization for economic globalization. According to Peck and Tickell (2002), "neoliberalism has provided a kind of operating framework or 'ideological software' for competitive globalization, inspiring and imposing far-reaching programs of state restructuring and rescaling across a wide range of national and local contexts." There have been three main policy cycles of neoliberal capitalism from the 1970s to the 1990s. The first cycle consisted of the "experimental proto-neoliberalisms" of the 1970s, this was followed by the Reaganomics of the 1980s, and the Washington Consensus of the 1990s (ibid.). The endurance of neoliberal capitalism throughout the three policy cycles demonstrate that, despite the flaws in its first two cycles, neoliberal capitalism is self-sustaining due to its constant mutations. In its current policy cycle, neoliberal capitalism is normalized and inaccessible, shifting all power to the technocratic elite in government. Things that were once hotly debated, such as trade policy or interest rates, are now left to the "higher-ups."

However, there has been growing dissent regarding neoliberal capitalism, especially since the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, which was the direct result of the political and economic shifts of the neoliberal era. The crisis has led to a growing realization that global capitalism could be a highly unstable and crisis-ridden system. Neoliberal capitalism appealed to individual desires to betterment — the idea of the market, for neoliberal supporters, was to make the individual freer as the market gave agency (ibid.). Yet, since the crisis, the implementation of austerity measures has now long been part of the "neoliberal repertoire." These measures often included the "fiscal purge" of the social state, deriving from a base neoliberal motive "to roll back the frontiers of the state" (Peck, 2012). Yet, with the social state reduced, when financial crises did occur, some nations were hit harder than others and inequalities between and within nations became more pronounced.

Unfortunately, after decades of reinventing itself, neoliberal capitalism has positioned itself to be above reproach. One of the most critical aspects of the current policy cycle of neoliberal capitalism is that it is punitive. Peck calls our current policy cycle "deep neoliberalism" as it has the controversial title of being a "regulatory project" or "regime" (Peck & Tickell, 2002). It is this punitive characteristic that, even in the face of repeated financial crises, manages to erode "pockets of political and institutional resistance to neoliberal hegemony" (ibid.).

Positioning the Role of TAPGs

TAPGs can be positioned to expose internal contractions in the system, but as I will show in the sections below, in the battle for knowledge production, neoliberal policy groups are currently much more cohesive than alternative policy groups. This "sparse networking" of TAPGs is largely due to resource disparities, "as well as a hierarchal mode of organization that makes elite integration common practice" (Carroll, 2016b). These structural constraints

may be part of the reason that TAPGs are currently operating the way they do: only around 2.3% of TAPGs define their knowledge production as anti-capitalist (Sapinski, 2016).

The mobilization of TAPGs in the South — that were formed due to a mobilization of counter-thought — and the ability of some TAPGs in the South to form strategic linkages with TAPGs in the Global North and South, as will be elaborated further below, show that globalization has created a discursive space that allows for marginalized actors from the South to engage with the current academic literature and produce counter-narratives. However, as articulated by Habermas, a critical theorist who focused on the social transformations of Western societies, the "indissoluble tension between capitalism and democracy generate an "irresistible inner dynamic," which disfavours the life-world as the site of communicative rationality and democratic self-determination" (Wellmer, 2014). Due to the pervasive neoliberalization of knowledge on a systemic level, it is difficult for TAPGs to gain traction and produce revolutionary change.

Emergence Contexts and Organizational
Frameworks of IFG and PRIA

IFG was founded in 1994, shortly after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect, in the wake of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which preceded the World Trade Organization (WTO; Coburn, 2016). When NAFTA was signed in 1993, "jobs were displaced in every state and major industry in the United States, with two thirds of lost jobs being from the manufacturing sector" (Scott & Ratner, 2005). In opposition to NAFTA, IFG emerged as a North–South "research, advocacy, and action organization focused on the impacts of dominant economic and geopolitical policies" (International Forum on Globalization, 2018).

Over time, IFG transformed from a "top-heavy" organization of high-profile thinkers into a knowledge producing organization comprising of "leading activists, economists, scholars, and researchers" from the international Left (Coburn, 2016). A small-scale organization, IFG seems to get its funding from independent donations and charitable foundations; this allows them more freedom in what they choose to address (International Forum on Globalization, 2018). However, as a result of a recent funding crisis in the wake of 2008, IFG is active on only two programmatic fronts (Coburn, 2016). This is not uncommon for alternative policy groups. As stated by J.P. Sapinski (2016), "in the best of times, alternative policy groups are challenged by the disjuncture between the counter-hegemonic aspects of their work and the predominant priorities of funding institutions." Due to their own divergent interests, many foundations and other funding channels have no interest in funding the "counter-hegemony."

IFG core programs are addressed primarily at the structural inequalities within the United States, strategizing and producing interventions concerning geopolitics and class that are arguably pronounced within the USA. According to IFG Executive Director Victor Menotti, the main strategy of the IFG is "listening about what the needs are of groups on the ground…to strengthen them, to build power with other constituencies to speak truth to power, to find platforms to speak to power — to make informed appeals for change" (Coburn, 2016).

There has been plenty of scholarship on the multiple inequalities in the United States. In Desmond's article, *The Eviction Economy*, he talked about how poverty in the United States is not an "unintended consequence" but a direct by-product of an exploitative culture in the present economy that ultimately reaps from and systematically constructs the poverty of its surplus population[2] (Desmond, 2016). Another article by Laura Pulido exposed intersections of environmental racism and racial capitalism within the poisoning of water in Flint, Michigan — stating that the Flint disaster was ultimately the result "of the local state acting within the context of neoliberalism" (Pulido, 2016). And who could forget Martin Luther King Jr's last presidential address to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which he began with, "There are forty million poor people here, and one day we must ask the question, 'Why are there forty million poor people in America?'" (cited in LaMothe, 2015).

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[2]   Referring to Marx's idea of "reserved army of labour" in Chapter 25 of *Das Kapital*

The other TAPG I focus on, PRIA, was established in 1982 and advocates and contributes to domestic strategies of national economic management. Unlike IFG, the emergence of PRIA was not in response to a specific policy or event. Rather, PRIA seems to have emerged in response to gaps in national governance, working with the government to build capacity in areas tied to social welfare and the improvement of livelihoods. This is evident in the 2016 annual report, where PRIA talks about its role in "making democracy work for all" in an "increasingly uncertain world" where there is "growing, visible and troubling inequality — of wealth, income, opportunity, access to basic services, [and] well-being" (PRIA, 2016).

PRIA prides itself on being the pioneer of participatory research. On their website, PRIA finds that, "in bringing about social change among the marginalised in India… it is PRIA's experience that promoting inclusive development requires enabling poor and marginalised citizens to be aware of their rights and responsibilities" (PRIA, 2010). Nationally based, PRIA has field offices in eight states, with linkages with 3000 NGOs, to help deliver its programmes (ibid.). It calls itself an "international centre for learning and promotion of participation and democratic governance," with key initiatives focusing on capacity building, knowledge building, participatory research, and citizen-centric development. PRIA has five core programmes: Youth in Democracy, The Dignity of My Labour, Engaged Citizens, Responsive City, #morethanjustbrides, and Child Friendly Smart Mandals.

A fundamental difference in PRIAs organizational framework is its focus on gender-equality and its additional capacity as a training institute. While IFG is mainly focused on raising awareness, PRIA states its mission is to improve the capacities and functioning of government institutions, "rather than merely pin-pointing the [weaknesses]" (ibid.). While IFG exposes through knowledge, PRIA does not "whistleblow," but use knowledge to build local capacity. For instance, established in 2005, the PRIA International Academy is the "intellectual arm of PRIA" and provides courses for mid-level development professionals: "informal adult learners who have an interest in development issues; and fresh graduates searching for a career in the development sector" (PRIA 2010).

Analysis of IFG Plutonomy and Climate Program

This program levels the blame of United States' paralysis of climate policy on an "increasingly few, stupendously wealthy plutocrats," who suffocate "traditional democratic expressions" like collective bargaining rights and clean air protections" (International Forum on Globalization, 2018). To fight this "neo-feudalism," IFG has recently used the Plutonomy program to target two American carbon billionaires, Charles and David Koch (ibid.). In its 2012 Report, *Faces Behind a Global Crisis*, that was prepared for United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC's) Doha Climate Change Conference, also known as COP 18[3], IFG states that the objective of the report is to "inform more global awareness and increase public pressure on the US actors stopping solutions to today's climate crisis" (Hellberg et al., 2012). The report picks from an earlier December 2011 report, *Outing the Oligarchy*, that was published for COP 17 in Durban, South Africa that also names the Koch Brothers for their undue influence on climate policy.

The report addresses two known gaps in finding a climate change solution: the lack of public awareness of the ultra-wealthy and the absence of understanding how the Koch brothers' actions have global impacts. In this latest report, IFG mentions how the US was called out for being the "spoiler of progress" during negotiations of several environmental groups, activists, and elected officials during COP 17 in Durban (Hellberg et al., 2012). As well, during the 2012 global talks in Bonn and Bangkok, despite a backdrop of high global emissions and increasing extreme weather events,[4] commitments to reduce emissions from majorly industrialised countries continued to be largely absent (ibid.).

Through repeated interactions with the UNFCCC, an international environmental treaty, the IFG Plutonomy and Climate program is waging what Carroll and Ratner (2010) called a "war of position." By flipping the script and disseminating counter-knowledge, IFG "shifts the balance of forces, opening space for radical alternatives and

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3 COP stands for 'Conference of the Parties.' UNFCCC's COPs are international climate change conferences that occur annually.
4 It was additionally mentioned in the report that the US had also experienced "historic heat, deepening drought, epic floods, and new "Superstorms," such as Sandy.

articulating dissenting groups into a system of alliances capable of contesting bourgeois hegemony" (ibid.). To gather the most support from the general public, the Plutonomy and Climate Program, uses "naming and shaming," a popular strategy that has been used by nongovernmental organizations, news media, and international organizations. This strategy is generally effective to highlight the undue influence of the Koch Brothers, who, like other power players, tend to operate through "shadow governance." Nonetheless, although Plutonomy and Climate is commended for its proactive engagement with international institutions, the program has low impact in producing change due to some pitfalls associated with the shaming strategy and minimal programmatic response to the issue at hand.

As noted by Taebi and Safari (2017), the shaming strategy has been used frequently against major corporations regarding their production of greenhouse gases. However, this strategy does not necessarily lead to compliance, especially when institutions cannot follow-up the shaming with penalties or legally imposed duties. As corporations are often closely tied to states, shaming strategies, when acted on by international institutions, can lead to a "race to the bottom," with standards meant to enforce climate change regulations deteriorating to appease climate-negligent corporations (ibid.). Although shaming is a good method to increase public awareness, it does little to attack the structures that allow elites like the Koch Brothers to have so much influence.

It is becoming increasingly hard for civil society organizations, like IFG, to make a mark on these elite groups, especially if they are small organizations with insecure funding. Within the Plutonomy and Climate Program, IFG is facing a "funding paradox." On the one hand, organizations that have minimal funding needs are at an advantage because they have freedom of press. For the Plutonomy and Climate Program, this means being able to publicly shame certain power players, or whistleblow harmful practices. However, in order to reach a wider audience and continue to develop relevant programmes and outputs, procuring funding becomes more appealing. Many TAPGs are facing the challenge of "having to do more, given the challenges and opportunities just reviewed, with less" (Sapinski, 2016). For alternative policy groups like IFG, this may make it seem that they must be dependent on some of the very institutions in the system they want to critique.

This paradoxical scenario is itself a symptom of neoliberal capitalism. Often termed the "neoliberalization of civil society," civil society organizations themselves become gatekeepers for national and global governance, often preventing "more radical and exceptional ideas" from being disseminated into the public sphere (ibid.). Although global civil society is growing and TAPGs continue to emerge, they face a hostile funding environment and compete for resources. As well, donor priorities are constantly shifting. For bilateral donors, "the political, strategic, personnel, and economic factors that influence funding decisions are always changing, bringing inevitable shifts in funding levels among countries, programme areas, and recipient organizations" (Parks, 2008). This causes fluctuations in funding for those CSO's that qualify for funding.

Considering that the odds are stacked against programmes like Plutonomy and Climate, starting a dialogue and engaging with the UNFCCC at least keeps the conversation going. However, to stay relevant, this programme must rely more on solidarity networks. Building solidarity relationships are key to producing counter-hegemonic blocs more capable of weathering the neoliberalization of civil society and actively fighting against the hegemonic elite. Solidarity-building ought to be characteristic of TAPGs, as they are transnational in nature, but this is not always the case. Regarding Plutonomy and Climate, tracking and exposing the corruption of private money through a handful of reports is little more than a smear campaign and does little to revert the global paralysis in climate change policy.

One of IFG's greatest successes was through solidarity networking. During the 1999 Battle in Seattle, IFG teach-ins armed activists with critical analyses of capitalist globalization. In January 1999, the City of Seattle was selected to host the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference. On the weekend, just prior to the WTO meeting, IFG held a two-day teach-in at Benaroya Hall in downtown Seattle. This teach-in focused on how countries could maintain autonomy in the face of globalization. As described by Paul Hawken (2000), who provides a first-hand account of the Battle in Seattle: "More than 2,500 people from around the world attended. A similar number were turned away. It was an extravagant display of research, intelligence, and concern, expressed by scholars, diplomats, writers, academics, fishermen, scientists, farmers, geneticists, businesspeople, and lawyers."

Prior to the teach-in, individual CSOs had been issuing papers and communiqués but they were almost entirely ignored by the WTO (ibid.). Yet, this direct engagement with local activists catalyzed one of the largest protests ever seen in Seattle, that may have demonstrated "what it takes to create real and meaningful change" (Engler, 2008). Engler articulates that, today, as a result of civil society movements like the Battle in Seattle, "trade talks at the WTO are in shambles, sister institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are now shrivelled versions of their once-imposing selves, and the ideology of neoliberal corporate globalization is under intense fire" (ibid.).

Analysis of PRIA Engaged Citizens, Responsive City (ECRC) Program

While the IFG Plutonomy and Climate program targets the "global," PRIA's ECRC program builds the "local." ECRC is a four-year long intervention supported by the European Union that focuses on "strengthening civil society of the urban poor to participate in planning and monitoring of sanitation services" (PRIA, 2010). This intervention is in response to the rapid urbanization occurring within India that is straining local services. In order to lessen the strain, ECRC advocates for civil society, so they can be included as stakeholders in the planning and monitoring of civic services. Their main strategy is bridging "practitioner and scientific knowledge, creating dialogical engagements that empower marginalized people" (Carroll, 2016a).

Currently, civil society in urban India is largely fragmented along lines of caste, class, and gender. For instance, middle-class India "does not appreciate the contribution of the urban poor; rather they see the as the main cause for the unsanitary conditions in cities" (ibid.). This is where ECRC comes in. ECRC is a capacity-building program, designed to facilitate engagement between the urban poor and municipalities, to improve service delivery and meet the needs of the rising urban population. Currently, the proposed project, which will be implemented from 2016–2019, runs across three cities in India — Ajmer in Rajasthan, Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh, and Muzaffarpur in Bihar — and uses capacity-building services to enable the urban poor to be more active citizens and increase their standing in community planning meetings. ECRC, like other PRIA programmes, is gender-mainstreamed. Thus, one of the target groups are front-line women sanitation workers and one of their specific objectives is to empower these workers to realise the "dignity of their labour" (ibid.).

In a 2017 report titled *Engaged Citizens, Responsive Cities: Stories of Change*, success stories from the ECRC project are documented. Some actions that the project took are highlighted in the report: "engaging the urban poor, organising them through Settlement Improvement Committees (SICs) in each informal settlement, [and] training young women and men SIC members to take leadership" (PRIA, 2017). By mobilizing the demands of the citizens, it is found that their municipalities are becoming more responsive to their needs. One case they mention is that of Bijoli, a settlement populated largely by tribal inhabitants. Although the community of Bijoli was skeptical of the formation of a SIC, once they were assured of the project's sustainable approach, they came together to from a SIC comprised of eight men, six women, and nine youth (PRIA, 2017). The members had success in having the community hand-pump repaired and advocated collectively for improvement to drain systems and the need for roads in the settlement. In May 2017, their bargaining with officials had some degree of success, as construction of a road and drains commenced (ibid.). Their sense of achievement and self-belief instilled in them the desire to oversee the development of their community and tackle future community issues together.

As part of ECRC, PRIA collaborated with the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) to organize a daylong National Conference titled "Social Innovations for Improving Urban Sanitation: Lessons for Scaling-up" in New Delhi. This collaboration was part of a larger collaboration between PRIA and CPR, as well as twelve non-government and not-for-profit organizations. The conference thus served to increase the knowledge capacity for CSOs, as PRIA and CPR worked to collate information from multiple initiatives to "identify patterns that link challenges to solutions across regions." Asides from these local solidarity networks and conferences, as of now, the EU has funded 410, 912 euros for the ECRC project (PRIA, 2010).

As mentioned, PRIA stated in its 2016 annual report that it seeks to make "democracy work for all" in a world of "growing, visible, and troubling inequality" of wealth, opportunity and well-being (PRIA, 2016). When this goal is analysed within the frame of ECRC, initially I found that PRIAs approach was too subdued. While

ECRC tries to empower vulnerable urban populations and increase their self-confidence, they do not up the ante when the state does not appear to address local demands. Where was the ECRC shame campaign against the Municipal Corporation that kept delaying building infrastructure in this disinvested community?

However, the question, as well analyzing ECRC, becomes more complicated when we consider that ECRC's main objective may have been more about increasing the self-confidence and resilience of vulnerable urban communities than campaigning against government officials. This can be viewed as a strategic choice, given the current funding crisis that has affected many TAPGs. Compounded with the lack of founding, TAPGs face a "crisis of imagination" that restricts formulating counter-hegemonic imaginaries. Kastuv Bandyopadhyay, the Director of Society for PRIA, states: "This paradigm needs to change, and all these decisions [that] resulted in the food crisis or environmental crisis or economic crisis combined is a governance crisis; it's a global governance crisis" (Carroll, 2016a). For PRIA, who are aware of the issues with the current paradigm of global governance, improving local capacity inherently works against a neoliberal form of individualism (ibid.). While this may be a more passive form of resistance, the ECRC is commended for strengthening 250 organizations and training 5000 women and youth (PRIA, 2017).

Overall Comparisons

The Plutonomy and Climate program revealed a weakness of TAPGs in North America: their reluctance to form solidarity networks. This reluctance is indeed symptomatic for most TAPGs within the Global North. According to Carroll and Sapinski (2013), TAPGs in the Global North, like IFG, tend to operate on more of a marginal level than other TAPGs. Carroll and Sapinski did a thorough study of 16 TAPGs including IFG and PRIA, situating how central they work in a network of 3977 INGOs. Generally, TAPGs in the Global South are much more "extroverted" than TAPGs in the Global North, forming South–South and North–South linkages while North-based TAPGs may be hesitant to work with those in the South and refrain from working closely with other CSOs in the Global North (Sapinski, 2016). However, these traits are not set in stone, especially in the case of IFG.

For IFG, its more reclusive tendencies as of late are a stark contrast to its role in the 1999 Battle in Seattle and has resulted in its programs having considerably less impact. Carroll and Sapniski (2013) have theorized that there has been a "fissure" in the global networks, which are currently more factionalized than they were in the 1990s likely due to the impact of the neoliberalization of civil society. However, these so-called "fissures" only necessitate that TAPGs like IFG reinvent themselves or perish. Despite its reputation as a leading educational and research organization, IFG almost folded recently due to a lack of funding and thus had to severely reduce its programmatic front (Coburn, 2016). If IFG had been better equipped through the years with strategic alliances, this may not have been the case.

On the other hand, TAPGs operating from a localized standpoint, especially Global South TAPGs like PRIA, have seen more modest alternative knowledge programming "due to difficulties from moving from subalternity to counter-hegemony" (ibid.). The reluctance for North–South partnership on the part of Global North TAPGs is partly to blame. In the absence of these linkages, TAPGs like PRIA must rely on external funding. PRIA sought funding from the EU for its ECRC program. While the ECRC program had its merits, aligning with the EU meant being less creative with the programming as "funders increasingly target specific programs and insist upon measurable impact" (Sapinski, 2016).

The North/South distinction is part of neoliberal capitalism's dominant narrative of purposeful exclusion that tilt global markets against the South. According to Gita Sen, the General Coordinator for Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, another Global South based TAPG, the North/South distinction continues to create issues within civil society: "You look at the inequalities, exclusions, marginalizations. Some of them are identity-based exclusions … that's why seminars, workshops with allies are important — that's how you create the counter-story. We have to be actually talking to each other" (Coburn, 2016).

Concluding Remarks

Although both the IFG and PRIA program analyzed above are far from perfect, the gains they have made and the strategies they have used show how TAPGs can play a key role in shrinking the social space of the elite. For IFG's Plutonomy and Climate program, engaging with the UNFCCC global climate change discussions was a "war of position." Tracking "Koch Cash," or the undue influence of "private money," started a dialogue that used the 'Doha Deadlock' to expose the true nature of climate change paralysis amongst global governance institutions. The publications disseminated as part of the Plutonomy and Climate program were counter-hegemonic imaginaries — alternative visions and policies to globalization that were more "sustainable for people and the planet" (International Forum on Globalization, 2018).

PRIA, on the other hand, has truly cultivated a strong network with other CSOs that has helped it to deliver grassroots programs that are in-tune with local concerns. In the ECRC project, PRIA's strong background in participatory research helped it connect better to the urban poor population its project sought to help. While PRIA operates on more constraints than IFG due to being managed by external funders, its focus on South–South solidarity networks is integral to an alternative post-colonial imaginary of the Global South, while its focus on fostering equitable democracy is a passive resistance to a system that is built on unequal development.

Nonetheless, analysis of Plutonomy and Climate and ECRC have demonstrated the impact of the fragmented relationships between Global North and Global South TAPGs. This fragmentation has led to a less cohesive counter-hegemonic front that has led to many TAPGs struggling for survival in an environment that is ultimately set against them — amidst hostile funding environments and having to be complicit within a system they are trying to critique. Part of the issue is a reluctance on the part of Global North TAPGs to align with TAPGs in the Global South due to a continued dichotomy of North/South. This dichotomy has proven to be the undoing of a unified counter-hegemonic front, as TAPGs continue to operate as fragile, small pockets of resistance. A cohesive form of intellectual leadership is necessary to rebuild movements and structures of resistance so that the ends of alternative knowledge can be utilized towards a justice-based globalism.

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