Between March 2009 and October 2010, Sexuality Policy Watch (SPW) organized a series of three regional Dialogues on Sexuality and Geopolitics in Asia (Hanoi, March 2009), Latin America (Rio de Janeiro, August 2009) and Africa (Lagos, October 2010). These were followed by an Interregional Dialogue that brought together participants from the previous events (Rio de Janeiro, September 2011). The Dialogues were intended as a space to share knowledge, analyses and research findings. They followed a global research project, carried out from 2004 to 2007, that resulted in *SexPolitics: Reports from the Frontlines* (Parker, Petchesky & Sember, 2007)\(^1\), and that explored the dynamics of sexual politics in specific countries and global institutions through individual case studies. Our hope was that the Dialogues would build on this earlier project by breaking through the boundaries of the nation-state in ways that could shed light on transnational forces at work in sexual politics, particularly in the global South.

These Dialogues were not designed as a conventional research project, but rather as an opportunity to enhance collective processes of reflection on sexuality and politics, bringing together academics and activists engaged in various areas of sexuality research and advocacy. The central premise informing the exercise is that sexuality is always related to power. Based on this premise, the proposal was that the Dialogues would look into four areas of intersection: (1) sexuality and the

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\(^{1}\) Available at http://www.sxpolitics.org/frontlines/home/index.php
state/political processes, (2) sexuality and religion, (3) sexuality and science and (4) sexuality and economics. That said, the meetings were organized in close discussion and partnership with SPW collaborators and colleagues in the regions, who participated in regional taskforces and ultimately defined the meetings' composition and agenda. These regional taskforces adapted this overarching framework, with its four axes of discussion, in ways that reflected conditions prevailing in sexuality research and politics in each context, perceptions in relation to priorities and relevance, the availability of pre-existing research and analysis that contributed to the Dialogues, as well as the composition and profile of participants at the meetings and of the taskforces that organized them. This adjustable model inevitably produced refractions in terms of how the original framework was addressed and altered in each region.

The results of the Dialogues are included in the two-volume publication *Sexuality and Politics: Dialogues from the Global South*. The first, companion volume to this one includes a selection of six papers presented at the regional Dialogues, which reflect some of the major dilemmas and themes raised at each meeting. This second volume draws on all the papers presented and the larger discussions in the dialogue series in order to present a broader summary and synthesis of the discussions and debates that took place. We attempt to engage the totality of material processed in the course of these four meetings, also situating these in relation to theories and analyses available in the literature on the intersections examined between sexuality, the state and politics, religion, science and economics. The content presented here to the readers can be understood as a meta-analysis that combines the wealth of the knowledge and information shared in the Dialogues with the views and insights of many other thinkers and researchers, as well as with our own visions in regard to these four domains.

We are grateful to all participants of the three Dialogues who contributed to these discussions by sharing their ideas and experiences. In particular we want to express our deep gratitude to Rafael de la Dehesa, as without his knowledge and patience these publications would not be
possible, and also to Rosalind Petchesky for offering her wisdom and editing skills to enrich and refine the ideas we had developed in this exercise. We also thank the Ford Foundation for having supported this project, in particular, Barbara Klugman who was the Program Officer for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights when this cycle of debates took place. Most especially, we would like to recognize Gabriela Leite, the longtime activist and leader of the sex worker movement in Brazil, who participated in the Latin America Dialogue and who collaborated closely with us in SPW and at the Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association (ABIA) prior to her untimely death just before we finalized this text. Her courage and solidarity were an inspiration to us, and her thoughts and influence are present throughout these pages.

It is our expectation that these twin volumes will contribute to the continuing interrogations on the connections between sexuality theorizing and research and political change, highlighting blind spots and pitfalls but also breakthroughs and gains, however limited and provisional they may be.

Sonia Corrêa, Rafael de la Dehesa and Richard Parker
Rio de Janeiro, July 2014
States and Sexual Politics

There is, to begin with, a geopolitical understanding underlying the idea of a South–South dialogue that is central to this entire project and that needs to be unpacked. It is premised on the notion that despite vast differences within and across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, there are certain shared elements, rooted in these regions’ historic insertion in the global economy and experiences of colonial, semicolonial, and postcolonial subordination; that their violent confrontation with various global projects of modernization (liberal, socialist, developmentalist, neoliberal, and so on) has given rise to economic, political and cultural dynamics that are also loosely shared, if instantiated in very different ways. The dialogues on sexuality and geopolitics, then, began with the premise that these multiple strands of globalization are also intimate, embodied, and thus inflected by gender and sexuality. Moreover, otherwise diverse southern regions share a historical legacy in which processes of state formation, closely bound with histories of empire, have been constitutive of and constituted by constructions of sex–gender and racial orders (Connell, 1987; Omi & Winant, 1994). Contemporary sexual politics inevitably bears the mark of this shared history.

One set of traces and experiences loosely shared across societies in the “global South” involves a certain shallowness of the political public sphere and blatant gaps between laws and public policies on paper and their implementation in daily life. The experience of global South societies and states raises important questions about transnational models and prescriptions that have been advanced with regard to democracy, human rights and even sexual and reproductive rights. Social, ethnic and racial stratifications are undoubtedly key features of the contemporary landscape in both the South and the North. Nonetheless, in the case of southern countries these stratifications usually overlap with postcolonial remnants that make them acute and resilient in ways that are quite often distinct from those in the global North societies, where ethnic and racial tensions have also scaled up in the last decade, for example, in debates about immigration and anti-terrorism. With respect to
cultures, and within them sexual cultures, South-to-South conversations cannot avoid addressing the complex web of cultural meanings, practices and identities that is reconfiguring both transnational and local practices, and that is key to grasping more fully how gender and sexuality systems are both structured and in rapid flux (García Canclini, 1995; García Canclini et al. 1993).

All of this said, it is important to avoid the reification of categories. “What is Asia?” was the first question raised at the Asian Regional Dialogue, and the tendency of geopolitical categories, including regional and national identities, to erase internal heterogeneity (and inequality) was a recurring theme throughout the dialogues. Similarly, the expression “global South” is metaphoric. Used to denote nations historically subordinated by colonial expansion, it lumps together an enormous array of places and life-worlds under a single problematic rubric. Above all, it is important to recognize this heterogeneity and to contextualize Western imperialism within longer arcs of history. While scholars generally agree that an integrated global capitalist economy emerged through European conquests beginning in the fifteenth century, the scale and importance of earlier “world systems” should not be minimized. As early as the thirteenth century, interlocking networks of trade connected vast territories, from Venice and the Italian city-states, into eastern Africa and through Central Asia, stretching past the Arabian peninsula and the Indian subcontinent to encompass China and the Pacific islands off its coast, with important political and economic centers in China, India, and the Islamic Empire (Abu-Lughod, 1987–1988; Braudel, 1984; Arrighi, Ahmad & Shih, 1996; Hobson, 2009). Across the ocean, the Aztec and Inca empires connected vast systems of trade, stretching, respectively, from present-day Central America to the Southwestern United States, and from Colombia to Northern Chile and Argentina (Mignolo, 2000).

To suggest that the countries now occupying these territories can be solely understood in terms of a shared history of European colonization would be clearly reductive and would risk reinscribing problematic portrayals of these regions as merely consumers, not producers, of global history. Moreover, colonial and postcolonial experiences are themselves heterogeneous. Can the semicolonial
status of nineteenth-century China be compared to the experience of direct colonial administration of Indochina? Postcoloniality in Mexico, after two centuries of formal independence, is quite different from the postcolonial conditions in Ghana or India (McClintock, 1995). Finally, the terminology of global South and North should not be used to suggest fixed or stable regional characteristics or to invoke old dichotomies between development and underdevelopment. Without drawing equivalencies in material conditions, it is nonetheless true that growing economic polarization in both North and South, increased international migration, and the greater economic weight of the so-called BRICS (i.e., Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) are intensifying the development of a south in the north and a north in the south, “rendering both sites of growing contradictions” (Dirlik, 2007, p. 15).

With all these caveats in mind, participants at the dialogues addressed a variety of themes related to sexual rights advocates’ relationship with the state, political societies, other social movements, and international actors, underscoring both differences and shared challenges across and within regions that, inevitably, were only partially “represented”. Here, we present some of the principal threads of discussion. We begin by turning briefly to the reverberations of colonial legacies and processes of postcolonial state formation in contemporary sexual politics, underscoring the imbrication of historic constructions of sex–gender orders with various projects of modernization. We follow by considering the consequences of the recent turn to formally democratic regimes in many countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, assessing the promises and pitfalls opened by the language of sexual, reproductive, and human rights in contemporary political debates. We then turn to the changing contours of governmentality in the contemporary context of globalization and their implications for activism.

**Historical excursions (with a view to the present)**

A growing body of research has underscored the entanglement of constructions of gender and sexuality with the histories of colonialism (Chatterjee, 1989; Epprecht, 2004; Phillips, 2011; Sadock,
For imperial powers, the colonies became a projection screen for pornographic fantasies of racialized desires and anxieties, constitutive of metropolitan identities and self-understandings (McClintock, 1995). Iberian colonizers imagined the Native Americans they encountered as noble savages, innocent of sin, like Adam and Eve before the Fall. French colonial observers in Indochina projected Orientalist visions of gender inversion, describing a world of effeminate men and hypersexualized women (Proschan, 2002; Said, 1978). In her paper presented at the African Dialogue (included in Volume I), Sylvia Tamale observed: “The bodies of African women especially worked to buttress and apologize for the colonial project.” Depicted as “insatiable, amoral, and barbaric beings” and “the antithesis of European mores of sex and beauty,” such representations became key tropes in narratives of barbarism and civilization, the ideological scaffolding of empire, “fundamental to the consolidation of imperialism”. These images and anxieties informed political practices, reflecting a particular concern over the possibility of sexual intermingling between colonizers and colonized, the violent intimacies of empire, and the threat to boundaries posed by miscegenation and racialized children (Stoler, 1997). Colonial policies regulating religious expression, marriage and kinship, sexual relations, urbanism, hygiene, and public health, while routinely confronted with everyday practices of resistance, negotiation, and reinterpretation, nonetheless shaped the bodies, sexual practices and understandings of gender of both colonizers and colonized. In short, in many dimensions of life affected by colonialism, sexuality and gender constituted central axes for the exercise of imperial authority, critical to the maintenance of racial boundaries and the larger colonial order (Stoler, 1989).

The imperial project in the Americas that dominated the first era of European imperial expansion was a joint enterprise between Iberian monarchies and the Catholic Church. Both saw it as a continuation of religious wars against the Islamic presence on the Iberian Peninsula, and the Vatican granted monarchs, as representatives of Christendom, considerable authority over Church affairs (Casanova, 1994). As missionary colonizers, Iberians had ambitions that went beyond economic exploitation and military control, entailing efforts to “colonize the imagination” and the life worlds of
indigenous communities, including understandings of sex, reproduction, and the family (Gruzinski, 2004). In their missionary fervor, colonial authorities imposed and adapted various ideologies and administrative techniques imported from Europe, including the Canonical regulation of marriage, the practice of confession, and legal proscriptions equating sodomy with treason, punishable by death (Gruzinski, 1989; Lavrin, 1989; Mott, 1988; Figari, 2007). The principle of honor rationalized the colonial order, targeting women’s sexuality for particular control with tight prescriptions around compulsory virginity and marital chastity. Supporting elite claims to social status, that principle drew distinctions based on race, virtue, “legitimate” birth, and social class, with profound implications for people’s life chances (Twinam, 1989).

Such techniques of government were generally not directly transposed from the metropole but rather altered and adapted to the perceived imperatives of colonial rule. The notion of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood), associated with the principle of honor, for instance, had originally been deployed to police the boundaries of Christendom on the Iberian Peninsula, against Jews, Muslims, and recent converts to Christianity (Martínez, 2004). In New Spain and Brazil, it was elaborated through theories that contemplated the possibility of redeeming Indian but not African blood through miscegenation, thus biologizing early notions of race in ways mediated by sexed and gendered ideologies to rationalize the use of African slave labor (Martínez, 2004).² Needless to say, such rules were routinely skirted, resisted, and contested, as evidenced by Church documents lamenting Native Americans’ disregard for the confession, by syncretized religious practices that loosely grafted Catholic precepts onto African and Native American beliefs and worldviews, and by ecclesiastical records of trials for witchcraft, sodomy, and adultery suggesting that counter-hegemonic sexual practices were not uncommon. Such expressions speak to the practical limitations

² It is worth noting, however, that at least in the case of Brazil, Jewish “blood” was systematically screened as a parameter to allow Portuguese colonizers to attain higher ranks in the administration or even to be granted aristocratic status by the Crown. This concern resulted from the high number of converted Jews (marranos or New Christians) sent to Brazil in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Cabral de Mello, 2009).
of colonial government and the relatively shallow penetration of the Church’s civilizing mission, particularly evident in Brazil, where the Portuguese maintained the characteristics of a mercantile extractive empire much longer and where the Church’s institutional presence was comparatively weak (Casanova, 1994).

As the imperial enterprise deepened and expanded into other regions of the world, Europe itself went through sequential waves of political and civil strife, inherent in the consolidation of the new capitalist order. In the course of this history, absolutist states expropriated power from smaller political units and looser structures of government (e.g. feudal kingdoms), eventually contributing to the emergence of large-scale bureaucracies capable of subordinating sovereign authority to abstract rules of conduct and establishing a governmental presence within clearly-demarcated territorial boundaries. This process thus gave rise to what classical accounts of state-formation posit as the central hallmarks of the modern state (Weber, 1958, 1978). It is important to consider in this context the insights of revisionist histories, which have sought to situate such accounts in the context of larger global currents. Where classic accounts regard the emergence of modern nation-states as largely endogenous to Europe and later bestowed on the world through imperial benevolence (Tilly & Blockmans, 1994; Anderson, 1991), recent critiques have emphasized both Afro-Asian contributions to state development (Hobson, 2009) and the “boomerang effect” of colonial practices, repatriated from the colonies and incorporated into the “juridico-legal structures of the West” (Branch, 2010; Foucault, 2003, 2007; Jung, 2008; Silverblatt, 2004).

In the course of these developments, two principles of delimitation of sovereign power began to take shape in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Foucault, 2008). One involved the development of a new liberal form of polity that conceived state–society relations in terms of a social contract. According to the social contract fiction, free men in a state of nature abdicate their liberty in exchange for protection by the newly constituted sovereign state, thereby becoming free citizens who can claim rights against it and hold it to account. Premised on the androcentric
notion of transcendent “man” that grounds Western humanism, social contract theory demarcated political boundaries between citizens (European men, owners of property, who as participants in the contract could claim such rights) and non-citizens (who, remaining outside the contract, had no such recourse). It also drew boundaries between a public realm grounded in the principles of equality among free citizens and a private realm that, while establishing limits on sovereign authority in matters like religious expression and individual conscience (thus instituting the principle of secularism, or laicité), also preserved and naturalized established hierarchies of race, gender, and social class, thus articulating two parallel and contradictory logics of power (Pateman, 1988).

The second delimitation of sovereign power was demarcated by utilitarian precepts and technical rationalities, drawing boundaries between things that fell within the competence of sovereign authority and things that did not (e.g., the “invisible hand” of the market). Michel Foucault (1991, 2003, 2007, 2008) identifies this transformation with the emergence of governmentality, a new mode of governance that, without displacing the sovereign power to command and take life, would eventually come to dominate it. Governmentality broadly refers to political rationalities and institutional techniques designed to manage individual and collective conduct toward the realization of some notion of collective wellbeing. Foucault associates its emergence with the historic development of biopower, a modern rationality of governance that, with population as its object, brought the life processes of populations (fertility, mortality, morbidity, etc.) under the purview of rationalized administration. Governmentality thus progressively articulated the administrative apparatuses of modern bureaucratic states with emerging systems of knowledge, such as criminology, pedagogy, anthropology, demography, urbanism, public health and social welfare. While inscribing areas of civil society beyond the competence of sovereign authority, then, this transformation simultaneously facilitated an enormous expansion of governmental power through capillary techniques of management that would come to envelop more (and more intimate) spheres of life within its domain.

Both transformations would have profound effects not only on European states but also on the
structure and ideological underpinnings of late colonial relations. The abstract foundational principles of equality and self-rule underlying the social contract immediately generated rights claims, conflicts, and political struggles around the redistribution of resources and questions of political inclusion and representation, raising the central and still unresolved question of who is or is not included in the social contract and under what terms. The contradictions inherent in the division between public and private would inspire early Marxist and feminist challenges to liberal doctrines as well as antislavery and anticolonial resistance. As the political theorist Uday Mehta (1997) has argued, such liberal principles presupposed and only partially obscured strategies of political exclusion based on racist notions of civilizational backwardness and inscrutability, rationalizing their coexistence with continued imperial domination. The promises of democracy, citizenship, and popular sovereignty were thus folded into evolving Eurocentric notions of a universal modernity and the pedagogic missions advanced by late imperial powers. At best, they were held out as future possibilities for colonized people, provided the alleged pathologies of native cultures could be overcome, key among them the allegedly backward treatment of women and purportedly aberrant sexual practices that so obsessed imperial powers (Chatterjee, 1989, 1993; Sen, 2002). At the same time, the proliferation of biopolitical technologies of governmentality contributed to a hardening of state racism. Justifications for conquest came to be grounded in the precepts of scientific racism, presupposing essential and absolute difference, as categories of race, tribe, religion and caste became increasingly sedimented through their institutionalization in technologies of colonial rule (Foucault, 2003; Stoler, 1995; Dirks, 2001). These histories and the extensive academic literature that has explored them over the past two decades provided an important backdrop for discussions at the dialogues. They helped to highlight the ways in which sharply contrasting constructions of sexuality have been articulated with various “modernizing” projects that have been both imposed on and pursued by actors in the global South, as we elaborate in the following sections.
Postcoloniality and the dilemmas of modernization

In their presentation at the Latin American meeting (included in Volume I), Mario Pecheny and Rafael de la Dehesa took up the central theme of universalist constructions of modernity, tracing Latin American elites’ historical inscription of gender and sexuality within larger modernizing projects, “both liberatory and repressive”. As the authors observed, the Latin American republics that emerged from the wars of independence of the nineteenth century, without exception claiming modern liberalism as a foundational tradition inherited societies that were deeply stratified by race, gender and social class (Avritzer, 2002, Martin Barbero, 2003). Fundamentally Eurocentric in their outlook, new national elites advanced liberal and secularizing reforms informed by European experiences over the course of the nineteenth century, with complex and sometimes contradictory effects on gender and sexual relations and distinct implications for different sectors of society. For example, beginning with the Brazilian penal code of 1830, sodomy was decriminalized in most countries in the region, reflecting the influence of the French Napoleonic Code. However, laws regulating morals and good customs, corruption of minors, assaults on public decency, and vagrancy permitted continued repression to uphold prevailing orders of sex, gender, race, and social class. Restrictive laws on abortion, which were not part of colonial criminal prescriptions or even canonical rules, would be included in post-independence criminal justice codifications and would remain on the books far into the twentieth century; in many cases these anti-abortion laws are still applicable today.³

Secular reform movements were stymied not only by political elites’ vested interests in preserving (indeed, deepening) social hierarchies but also by the limits of state capacity. Moreover, potential

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³ The reason why colonial criminal law and canonical norms did not include a prohibition on abortion must be understood as an effect of the longstanding Catholic theological debates around the status of the fetus as a person, which, significantly enough, had to wait until the late nineteenth century to be resolved (Rosado Nunes, 2012). Only then were secular biopolitical structures of governmentality condemning abortion fully established.
reforms emanating from a dominant political culture with intellectual attachments to liberal precepts collided with broad-based clientelistic practices that relied on the patrimonial power of local political bosses. As Pecheny and de la Dehesa (2013) noted, elite reliance on the perceived “patriarchal stability” represented by local landholding families delayed reforms of family law in many countries until well after independence (Deere & León, 2005; Dore, 2000). More generally, informed by theories of scientific racism and fears of national degeneration, liberal and subsequently, positivist elites would “prioritize [conservative] modernizing projects over individual liberties and egalitarian ideals, establishing highly exclusionary oligarchic republics”. This is the backdrop, Pecheny and de la Dehesa contend, against which one should understand elite efforts to whiten national populations by attracting European immigrants and the forced removal of indigenous communities through measures ranging from campaigns of genocide in the Southern Cone to the privatization of communal lands in Mexico. Early efforts to regulate prostitution and control venereal disease, which spread throughout the region in the nineteenth century, were also articulated with larger political projects seeking to promote civilization, order, and progress. The imbrication of constructions of gender and sexuality with modernizing projects has continued to the present day. As the authors observe:

The advocates of eugenic policies in the early twentieth century who promoted prenuptial certificates with the goal of ensuring national development and “racial health”; the Marxist militants of the 1960s and 1970s who dismissed homosexuality as a form of bourgeois deviance to be superseded on the revolutionary path to socialism; and contemporary political actors positing the legal recognition of sexual rights as a symbol marker of so-called modern states, all in one way or another inscribe sexualities into a binary of past and present, informed by a universal telos … (Pecheny de la Dehesa, 2013, p. 110)

The point, they note, is not to draw ethical equivalencies among these projects. Rather, it is merely to underscore how the governance of desire continues to be mapped onto larger ideologies of economic and political development in ways that at least raise questions about who has access to
the products and practices said to be ‘modern’ and about what gets constructed as a past to be overcome.

Many of these themes emerged in distinct but parallel ways at the African Regional Dialogue, where the question of colonial legacies received the most attention. It was raised in relation to the relative weakness of many contemporary African states given the current asymmetries of the global system, themselves in good measure a colonial legacy. The issue of colonial legacies also came up in relation to the common framing of contemporary debates around sexual rights on the continent in ways that invoke the defense of African tradition against neocolonial pressures. In her paper presented at the dialogue, published in the first volume of this publication, Sylvia Tamale (Tamale, 2013) also highlights the scientific underpinnings of imperial projects, beginning with a critical interrogation of the power dynamics shaping colonial (and postcolonial) research on sexualities:

Nowhere were assumptions regarding the ‘knower’, the ‘known’ and the ‘knowable’ taken more for granted than in sexuality research conducted on colonized populations such as those found in Africa … Generally speaking, research in the colonial context was conducted along a traditional hierarchy of power between the researcher and the researched. It was almost always assumed that the researchers were all-knowing individuals and the researched, naive “subjects”. It was further presumed that only the former could create legitimate, scholarly knowledge, usually through written reports and publications, with little or no acknowledgement of the role the researched played in the process. (Tamale, 2013, p. 19)

Indeed, technological innovations and the sciences became foundational tenets in the ideologies of racial superiority and civilizing projects used to justify imperial expansion (Keller, 2001; and Section III below. As Tamale traces in the same essay the colonial production of knowledge about African sexualities, often financed by colonial governments or mercantile enterprises, from the racist reports
by early colonial white missionaries and explorers to the ethnographic and public health studies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These studies, she notes, played a key role in the dissemination of racist stereotypes about African sexualities, including assertions about Africans’ purported lasciviousness and promiscuity and myths that African women menstruated in greater quantity or could give birth without pain. Colonial research in public health, she notes, focused narrowly on questions like containing venereal diseases and curbing perceived sexual perversions (see also Walther, 2008).

Contemporaneous with similar efforts in Asia and the Americas as well as Europe, the regulation of sex work became a key site of public health interventions, regarded by colonial officials as necessary to sustain their military and administrative presence. Indeed, comprising an early expression of global regimes to control sexualities, legal frameworks regulating brothels, mandating the registration and periodical medical examination of sex workers, and confinement of those found infected were adopted in Russia in 1843, Italy in 1860, Great Britain in 1864, Japan in 1871, and Argentina in 1875, among many other states. In 1867, the International Medical Congress in Brussels voted to form a commission to share Belgium’s model of regulation with other governments (Limoncelli, 2006a). In the colonies, the French, who had originally instituted this model alongside Napoleon’s expanding armies, established elaborately racialized regulatory systems designed to ensure that men from the metropolis and the colonies had access to their “own” sex workers, even selling bonds to raise money for brothels in Morocco (Limoncelli, 2006b). In the British colonies, ordinances similar though wider in scope than Britain’s domestic Contagious Diseases Acts began to be instituted from the 1860s, again operating with a narrow focus on controlling the sexuality of sex workers, with little interest in their male clients (Levine, 1996; Phillips, 2002; Sadock, 2013). Notably, Tamale highlights continuities between the focus, purpose, and power relations underlying public health research on sexualities in the colonies and postcolonial knowledge production regarding reproductive health and HIV/AIDS (see below).
The medical and social sciences were thus incorporated into colonial technologies of governmentality and later institutionalized and deployed to administer behavior, not only in Africa but elsewhere. Timothy Mitchell (1991a) describes the concomitant emergence of a new object of knowledge and instrument of control in late nineteenth-century colonial Egypt: “The Egyptian character — a notion later replaced with terms such as culture — was to be carefully examined, for a disciplinary politics was predicated upon this object. Such examination was itself part of the disciplinary mechanism that places under surveillance and continually watches” (p. 104). Citing an inspector general of Egyptian schools, Mitchell discusses how the social sciences were mobilized to inculcate European civilization, on the understanding that the first task of government was “to make an account of all the defects of the popular character [the work of ethnography] … to look for their origin [the work of history], and to bring about their cure by means contrary to those which have caused them” (quoted in Mitchell, 1991a, p. 105).

Likewise, Nicholas Dirks (2001) describes the gradual development of an “ethnographic state” in colonial India that proceeded through the “anthropologization of colonial knowledge”. Dirks notes a change in colonial reports toward the late nineteenth century, as authors “began to compile ethnographic facts systematically, as if they were administrative necessities rather than antiquarian artifacts” (p. 150). While the technologies of colonial rule were infused with the racist, sexist, and heterosexist assumptions of global currents such as scientific racism, criminal anthropology, and eugenics, it is worth underscoring the independent effects of the transformation of colonial taxonomies, whatever their content, into institutional practices, which went hand in hand with a transition in statecraft writ large. Discussing the same transformations that Foucault identifies with governmentality, James Scott (1998) argues that the “heroic and greatly schematized process of abstraction and simplification” (p. 22) that permitted the intensification of governmental power implied a new way of seeing the social world to make it legible for the purposes of administration:

Most obviously, state simplifications are observations of only those aspects of social life
that are of official interest. They are *interested*, utilitarian facts. Second, they are also nearly always written (verbal or numerical) *documentary* facts. Third, they are typically *static* facts. Fourth, most stylized state facts are also *aggregate* facts … Finally, for most purposes, state officials need to group citizens in ways that permit them to make a collective assessment. Facts that can be aggregated and presented as averages or distributions must therefore be *standardized* facts (James Scott, 1998, p. 80, emphasis in the original).

The symbolic violence, practical limitations, and concrete failures of this broader transformation in statecraft continue to haunt contemporary sexual politics in various ways, lying at the heart, for instance, of many critiques of contemporary identity politics. In the context of a historical analysis, however, they are worth highlighting as they point to another transformation in colonial rule associated with the turn to anthropology, the reverberations of which also elicited discussion at the African Regional Dialogue: the institutionalization of notions of African “tradition” or “culture” that accompanied colonial governments’ growing reliance on tactics of indirect rule (Chanock, 1989). Mahmood Mamdani (2007) has underscored a shift in British colonial policy following the Indian Mutiny of 1857, with Queen Victoria’s proclamation of a “secular colonialism”, whereby the empire would not interfere in the domain of religion. The move gave further impetus to a process already underway in Africa, beginning in the British colony of Natal (part of present-day South Africa), that invested traditional chieftaincies with considerable authority within newly fixed territorial boundaries that came to be governed under customary law (Mamdani, 1996).

The growing reliance on indirect rule, as Mamdani explains, responded to the imperatives of government as understood by the British, given the limitations not only of the small numbers of European administrators stationed in the colonies but more importantly of an assimilationist colonial project. That project was based on alliances with “the educated strata of Africans, those who aspired to self-administration and independence” and were ”the most pro-Western of any group”. With the shift to indirect rule, colonial administrators turned to local allies with greater cultural legitimacy
The new policy entailed a simplification of the much more complex realities of ethnic and familial identifications that existed prior to the colonial order and their institutionalization as stable, discrete, and unitary identity categories: “The more custom was enforced, the more the tribe was restructured and conserved as a more or less self-contained unit” (p. 51).

Under the new policy, chiefs were granted extensive executive, legislative, judicial, and administrative powers, as a territorialized legal distinction was created between races and tribes, the former governed under civil law and the latter under customary law. British colonial rule treated Islamic law in some territories as another variant of customary law and in others as a separate system, alongside the civil and customary regimes (Jeppie, Moosa, & Roberts, 2010). The delegation of authority across legal systems varied, for example, in jurisdiction over criminal law, although family or “personal status” law was systematically delegated across these regimes, mapping onto European divisions between public and private realms (Hashim, 2010; Jeppie, Moosa, & Roberts, 2010; Chanock, 2000). A new and complementary division thus emerged between direct and indirect colonial rule that loosely mapped onto the territorial imperatives of urban and rural governance. Civil power spoke the language of law but was subject to oversight by a civil society that was highly exclusionary and demarcated by racial boundaries, “while customary power pledged to enforce tradition”. Caught in a juridical limbo were “urban-based natives, mainly middle- and working-class persons”, who were often not subject to customary law or recognized as rights-bearing citizens or members of civil society (Mamdani, 1996, pp. 18–19). Following World War I, the French, the Portuguese, and the Belgians followed the British example, instituting policies of indirect rule in their colonial possessions (Mamdani, 1996, pp. 82–87).

It is worth noting that colonial rebellions and colonial powers’ reactions to them often intersected with discourses and norms related to gender and sexuality. This is sharply illustrated in the literary accounts and official reports of the same 1857 Great Rebellion in India that repeatedly mention the rape and mutilation of white women, even though no official records of rapes have ever been
found (Metcalf, 1964). Even more relevant is the fact that right after the rebellion, in 1861, the British Empire adopted a Penal Code whose reform included a number of relevant definitions in relation to sexuality, such as age of consent and the criminalization of “unnatural” sexual acts between males under article 377 (Agnes, 2011; Kirby, 2011; Ramasubban, 2007). The Penal Code was synchronically applied in Britain and India and rapidly transported to other colonies, strongly indicating that the regulation of “sex” (including the criminal repression of male homosexuality) at both the center and the periphery of the Empire was instrumental for colonial control in times of unrest (Sanders, 2009). This criminal prohibition — which remains intact in most places where it was introduced during colonial times — is a tangible trace of the Eurocentric colonization of other sexualities (Corrêa, Petchesky and Parker, 2008; Corrêa, Richard-Davis, & Parker, 2013; ILGA, 2013).

These historical trajectories had particular salience at the African Regional Dialogue in light of the recent politicization of sexualities in several countries where conservative religious and political authorities have condemned “sexual rights” as a neocolonial imposition. Countering with the defense of a (presumably unitary) “African culture”, national political leaders such as Presidents Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe have pushed to tighten criminal laws against homosexuality in recent years, decrying it as “un-African” (Reddy, 2001; Epprecht, 2010; Kaoma, 2012). Affiliates of the US-based Catholic organization Human Life International in several countries (among other religious and political voices) have campaigned

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4 Sanders’s (2009) analysis is particularly insightful as it retraces the origins of the sodomy proscription to Henry VIII’s attacks against the Catholic Church, when the sodomy law was used mainly against friars. He also recaptures how Lord Macaulay, the main British administrator of India, was central to the adoption of the new code in 1861 and examines the paradox of postcolonial nation states that have kept the code and article intact, quite often with the same number 377 (or 77). While sodomy laws were systematically instituted in British colonies, France abolished its criminalization in 1791. Such measures were therefore not instituted systematically across the French Empire in the same way, although they were instituted in a few colonies such as Benin, Cameroon, and Senegal (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

5 For detailed information on countries where sodomy laws inherited from colonial governments are still in place, see www.ilga.org. It is also worth noting that colonial powers bequeathed other criminal laws in areas such as abortion and prostitution, laws that also remain in place in many countries.
against birth control and abortion, likewise attributing them to neocolonial machinations aimed at population control (Kaoma, 2012; Buss & Herman, 2003).

In responses echoed at the African Regional Dialogue, sexual rights advocates on the continent have challenged this unitary construction of tradition both by reclaiming precolonial African traditions of same-sex desire and gender variance — as in the case of Zimbabwean activists’ appropriation of the term humgochani (to refer to homosexuality) (Epprecht, 2004) — and by underscoring the entanglement of existing legal frameworks and prevailing constructions and re-constructions of tradition with the colonial projects they purport to reject. This entanglement operates at two levels. First, such laws and constructions simultaneously internalize and erase the effects of colonial laws against sodomy and indecency, projecting them onto an idealized precolonial past. For example, in a brief presented to the South African parliament, the network of LGBT groups pressing for the Civil Unions Act, which legalized same-sex marriage, sought to demystify this view, countering: “Homosexuality is African; Homophobia is unAfrican” (Yarbrough, 2013). Second, sexual rights advocates have underscored the distortion of political constructions of “African tradition” or “culture” that occurred through their re-articulation with the structures of colonial rule. By grafting the rationalized techniques of modern statecraft, such as the codification of law, onto a more plural and flexible terrain of competing traditional practices, this transformation selectively sanctioned an account of African tradition that reflected dominant interests within the groups brought under its rule, at the same time establishing a new political vocabulary that finds echo in contemporary political debates (Chanock, 1989).

As Tamale succinctly summarized in the paper mentioned above, the dominant discourses of culture in contemporary Africa largely derive from constructions and reinterpretations by former colonial authorities in collaboration with African male patriarchs. Yet it is important to emphasize that in critiquing patriarchal deployments of “culture” — often framed in terms of a rights-versus-culture dichotomy in contemporary debates — Tamale was not affirming a transcendent notion of “rights”
as somehow “cultureless” or rejecting “culture” as inherently opposed to rights, to be overcome on the road to universality. Countering the binary arguments sometimes raised by sexual rights advocates, both in Africa and elsewhere, Tamale underscored the importance of working with and through culture in ways that recognize its mutability and the possibilities it opens as a “tool for emancipation.” “Culture,” she concluded, “is a double-edged sword that can be wielded creatively and resourcefully to enhance women’s access to sexual justice”.

Certain parallels are worth noting between these observations and discussions about postcolonial legacies at the other regional dialogues. In Latin America, as Pecheny and de la Dehesa noted in their panoramic paper, populist governments had key transformative effects in much of the region well into the twentieth century, enacting the first major pieces of labor legislation and social welfare policies. This key transition saw the mobilization of a first wave of feminist activism in various countries in the region around questions like access to birth control and women’s suffrage and had paradoxical effects on racial and ethnic politics in the region as well. Under populist regimes, integrative ideologies of “racial democracy” provided the foundation for new constructions of national identity, suggesting that the absence of legal segregation and widespread miscegenation in the region meant that the exclusionary legacies of slavery and colonialism had been resolved, and that racism was not a salient political issue. Retaining a fundamentally Eurocentric teleology, these ideologies were contradicted by the continued marginalization of people of indigenous and African descent, who continued to mobilize to contest these barriers. But they also subordinated political claims based on race and ethnicity to a dominant political discourse that privileged the language of social class. These ideologies of racial democracy and miscegenation persisted under the brutal military dictatorships that spread throughout the region in the 1960s and 1970s to counter the social transformations enacted by populist rule.

Transitions from these authoritarian regimes to formally democratic states beginning in the late 1970s saw a resurgence of activism around gender and sexualities, spearheaded by a second
wave of feminist activism, as well as a resurgence of mobilization for racial justice. Over time, the emergence of these parallel and partially overlapping movements has shed light on the complex intersections of crosscutting forms of oppression as well as significant tensions within sexual rights movements themselves. As Pecheny and de la Dehesa noted, it was in the context of quincentennial celebrations of the European “discovery” of the Americas in 1992 (celebrations that underscored the persistent Eurocentrism of significant sectors of Latin American elites) that Black feminists from the region organized the First Meeting of Black Women from Latin America and the Caribbean, where over 300 activists from 32 countries established a network to sustain their activities. A few years later, indigenous women activists, contesting their lack of representation at a preparatory meeting organized by feminists for the Beijing Conference on Women, created an alternative mechanism for deliberations in preparation for Beijing and subsequently convened the First Continental Meeting of Indigenous Women of the First Nations of Abya Yala in 1996 in Quito, Ecuador, where they established a regional network of indigenous women (Alvarez et al., 2002). More recently, activists mobilizing behind the adoption of an Inter-American Convention on Sexual and Reproductive Rights have organized regional meetings bringing together indigenous and feminist leaders to address possible tensions between the two movements’ agendas, such as the relative weight given to collective and individual rights in their respective agendas.

These debates speak in part to the ongoing legacies of internal colonialism that racially and ethnically marginalized communities faced well after national independence. In ways that loosely parallel debates around customary law and traditional chieftaincies in African polities, indigenous activists have claimed the right to various forms of political autonomy and self-determination. Though inflected by local histories of colonialism, state-building, and racial formation, these claims by First Nations activists simultaneously use the language of rights while reclaiming normative traditions outside of colonial liberalism. In the paper presented at the Latin American Regional Dialogue, Franklin Gil Hernández (2011) examined some of these themes, noting, for instance, recent public debates in Colombia over the question of “female genital mutilation” in the Emberá-Chami ethnic
group and on the relative priority given to the issue of abortion, regarded by some as responding primarily to an international agenda. In these debates, Gil explained, repeated charges were made that feminism amounted to a colonizing enterprise, imposing alien cultural values.

Echoing discussions at the African Regional Dialogue, Gil underscored the importance of an intersectional lens in sexual politics. Such a lens would permit attentiveness to two equally important issues that often tend to obscure one another: relations of male domination within marginalized ethnic communities, a concern that women within those communities have raised repeatedly; and the ways in which certain deployments of sexual health and rights discourses coming from the North do in fact harbor the potential for neocolonial dynamics, reinvoking the problematic history of metropolitan claims to universality.

Moreover, in ways that again echo some of the dilemmas posed by the governmentalization of “culture” and ethnic identities discussed at the African Regional Dialogue, Gil used the term “government of differences” to refer to a mode of governmentality of growing importance in Colombia (and elsewhere in Latin America). In these contexts too, the state responds to and organizes gender and sexuality rights claims following almost the same logic used in the nineteenth century to govern “populations” or “races” (whites, black, diverse indigenous communities, mestizos). In doing so, Gil noted, states often translate these complex and cross-cutting intersectional demands into discrete institutional and identity based categories (children, women, sexual diversity, Afro-Colombians, indigenous groups, people with disabilities, etc.) in ways that often amount to tokenism and undermine the possibilities for a coalitional politics. On the contrary, these governmental tactics often provoke competition among movements for access to resources and political attention. Once again, the governmental imperative to make populations legible (and thus governable) results in the institutional encapsulation of populations and atomization of social movements.
Troubling binaries: Identity and modernity at the Asian Regional Dialogue

Interestingly enough, the reverberations of colonial legacies and postcolonial state formation on contemporary sexual politics were not directly addressed as such at the Asian Regional Dialogue. This absence is particularly intriguing given the long history of precolonial Asian states, the depth of Asian states’ entanglement with colonial projects, as well as the existence of a significant literature on the effects of colonization and postcolonial conditions on modern state formation and re-configuration in the region (Chatterjee, 19896, 1993; Spivack, 1988, 1999). In our view, this primarily reflects the professional interests of the participants involved. That said, various debates at that regional dialogue examined the “problem of the state”, with a particular focus on the shifting boundaries of governmentality prompted by increased migration flows, the regulation of digital technologies, and the dilemmas of contemporary identity politics. In these contexts, participants alluded to dynamics that echoed some of the discussions at the other meetings and more directly addressed postcolonial dilemmas, albeit in more muted ways.

In this regard, for example, it is worth citing the presentations by Khuat Thu Hong, a researcher with the Institute for Social Development Studies in Vietnam, who explored public debates and moral panics relating to sexuality in that country. Hong described three recent sex scandals, all sparked by postings of “hot pictures and videos” in cyberspace. One of them involved a rising film star whose boyfriend posted a video on line of them having sex. The video prompted considerable debate, with the public divided on whether she was innocent or “promiscuous”. As events unfolded, she was accused and prosecuted for prostitution and sentenced to 18 months in a reeducation camp. After her release, she went into exile in the United States, and she is now considered to be the first Vietnamese “sexual exile”. As Hong argued, the scandals open a window onto some of the political and cultural contradictions experienced today in Vietnam. While new technologies have permitted a rediscovery of female sexual pleasure and agency and have given rise to a new
public discourse around a right to privacy, this has occurred in conjunction with a great deal of ambivalence. The Ministry of Culture has established new regulations such as dress codes for performers and Internet censorship, as well as educational media campaigns. According to Hong, these contradictory sociopolitical dynamics reflect a central tension between desires to modernize and desires to return to traditions.

A common theme addressed at all the dialogues, these multilayered tensions point to the emergence of a shared vocabulary that often mediates sexual politics in the global South. This vocabulary involves overlapping binaries between tradition and modernity, past and present, local and global, faith and science, culture and rights, even as these terms have distinct meanings reflecting the specific dynamics of national contexts. For example, the meaning of “tradition” varies widely between countries analyzed in the Dialogues — such as India, Indonesia Mexico, Nigeria or Vietnam — because if in some places religious forces and institutions play a strong role in defining “traditional” morality, in others sexual morals are embedded in predominantly secular cultures.

In the case of Vietnam, for instance, it is notable that the defense of “traditional” gender roles described by Hong occurs without reference to religious worldviews. Rather, it is deployed in the context of a secular state that lays claim to a socialist tradition, albeit modified in recent years through “market reforms”. Similarly with regard to China, researchers observed that “traditional values” have been advanced in the context of a socialist system restructured by market reforms. As Pan Suiming underscored, when the Communist Party began recruiting in rural areas in the 1920s, it developed a new public image based on sexual abstinence. Following the establishment of the revolutionary government in 1949, abstinence was reinforced as a tool of social control, including control of party cadres. Since 1978, however, Pan noted a certain opening of controls on people’s “private lives” as a means to shore up support for the regime. Yet, as Huan Yingying argued, the regulation of advertisements related to sexual products in public space is still constrained by state morality and policy priorities. These forces are evident in the distinctive ways in which condoms and
abortion services are advertised. Sexual morals still surround the ways in which the government promotes the use of condoms, by and large confining their use to married couples and restricting the time frames in which condom ads can appear on television. Abortion, which is instrumental to China’s population control policies, is, in contrast, widely advertised and not subject to moral restrictions. Both cases thus clearly illustrate how secular states, bound by strong principles of laïcité, are also traversed by sexed and gendered moralities (see also Giang & Nguyen, 2007).

One area where such binary constructions have gained particular salience is in the politics surrounding same-sex desire and gender variance. The categories “gay”, “lesbian”, “bisexual”, and “transgender” are examples of what Rosalind Petchesky and Radhika Ramasubban, in their summary of proceedings at the Asian Regional Dialogue, referred to as “floating identities”. Such identities delineate the contours of a global discourse variably appropriated by national institutions and societal actors to different effects, yet their deployment coexists with much more complex and heterogeneous terrains of same-sex desire and gender variance that assume quite different forms. Petchesky and Ramasubban noted a central tension between the potentially liberatory possibilities opened to some sectors of society through these transnational categories and the difficult translation of a “kaleidoscopic panorama of sexual and gender diversity” into rigidly normativized legal and biopolitical categories. Once again, such categorization may be driven by the governmental imperatives to make populations legible, now paradoxically shared by governments, activists, international agencies, NGOs and donors.

To address these difficulties, some activists have found ways to navigate across discursive repertoires and identity categories in contextually specific and shifting ways. As the Filipino researcher and activist, Malu Marin, observed at the Interregional Dialogue, discussion of identity politics among many LGBT activists in Asia is both “rooted in indigenous heritages and experiences, such as those of the waria in Indonesia, the hijra in India, [and] the bakla in the Philippines”, and “simultaneously shaped by global discourse and political developments”. This kind of navigation is premised on an
understanding of the provisional and contextually specific salience of particular identity categories, as Marin explained: “As practitioners in the field, we are fully cognizant that the meanings attached to these terms are perennially contested: labels are assigned different meanings in different locales. They also have subjective relevance and meaning to individuals who choose to identify with or attach themselves to such labels”. Marin’s observations resonate with Boellstorff’s (2005) and Jackson (2007) anthropological research on the selective appropriation of Western sexual categories by young people in Indonesia, who will call themselves gay and lesbian in some circumstances and not in others, depending on the context.

Two caveats are worth underscoring. First, such binaries between tradition and modernity, past and present, local and global, and so on, should not be accepted at face value. While it is important to take note of the colonial genealogies of contemporary political vocabularies, in part precisely to demystify such binaries, it is also important to recognize that situated political actors are deploying such frames not out of some atavistic impulse to return to the past but in response to very present social and political considerations. As Partha Chatterjee (1997) has suggested, often gendered, sexed, and racialized constructions of tradition operate today as mechanisms of selection to engage with processes of globalization and to construct competing modernities, which, like all contemporary cultural terrains, are inevitably hybrid.

In this regard, for example, participants at the African Regional Dialogue stressed the global linkages of political actors on the continent advancing homophobic and patriarchal political agendas in the name of tradition. They also highlighted how recent structural changes in contemporary national public spheres, particularly in the national media, have promoted these agendas, ultimately transforming the terms of political debate. In the context of Nigeria, for example, Dorothy Aken’Ova recounted how a media report condemning the House of the Rainbow as an “evil church” for its acceptance of gay people precipitated a moral panic, prompting an explosion in news coverage and police arrests that drove many of the people involved from their homes and ended in its
closure. During discussions at the dialogue, such examples were cited as reflecting not the weight of tradition but “the paradoxes of modernization” in Africa. Participants thus underscored how transformations associated with modernity, such as more competitive electoral politics and growing access to media, did not produce greater flexibility of gender and sexual norms but rather stimulated forces calling for greater restrictions.

Second, it is also important to note that the dilemmas described by Petchesky and Ramasubban in the case of Asia are only partially captured through binary constructions of the global and the local in particular and, indeed, are as much a function of the biopolitical technologies of administration institutionalized by contemporary states, regardless of the genealogy of specific identity categories. In this regard, for example, it is worth citing the presentation by Dédé Oetomo, also at the Asian Regional Dialogue, recalling the formal recognition of the waria in the 1970s by the Suharto dictatorship, following consultation with the recently created Council of Islamic Clerics, a move that made Indonesia the first Asian state to legitimize gender and body variance as a “third gender” and a legitimate category of state recognition. Oetomo, however, underscored the slippage between this univocal category, institutionalized by the state in the country in 1973, and the wide range of experiences it purports to capture, from individuals who modify their bodies through hormone use and sex reassignment surgery, to others whose identity, appearance, or dress does not cross gender lines. The example points to an inevitable slippage between rationalized identity categories instituted through state recognition, rooted in a governmental imperative of standardization, and the plurality of lived experiences they purport to represent.

From colonialism to “national development”

The years following World War II saw a second major wave of de-colonization (after the first, in the Americas, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). This second wave began with the independence of the Philippines (1946) and India (1947), followed by the stabilization of the Chinese
Revolution in 1949, which definitively broke with its semicolonial status while strengthening the socialist world, and then proceeded to sweep through Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean and Africa, through the 1970s. Political sovereignty by no means overturned the prevailing asymmetries of the global system, which were in some ways reproduced in the post–World War II political order (Mazower, 2009) and also reinscribed into a bipolar order divided into capitalist and socialist camps. With the creation of the Bretton Woods institutions and the UN system, the contours of a new project of development began to take shape. As Arturo Escobar (1995) describes: “The discourse of war was displaced onto the social domain and a new geographical terrain: the Third World. In the rapid globalization of US domination as a world power, the ‘war on poverty’ in the third world began to occupy a prominent place … The new emphasis was spurred by the recognition of chronic conditions of poverty and social unrest existing in poor countries and the threat they posed for more developed countries” (pp. 21–22). The term “Third World” was coined in 1952 by the French demographer Albert Sauvy, a high-level consultant to the UN Commission and Division on Population. Juxtaposed to the first world of advanced capitalist countries and the second world of the communist bloc, the term was incorporated into the new discourse of development to “describe societies that seemed to face difficulties in achieving the economic and political goals of either capitalist or socialist modernity”, though it was also appropriated by leaders and revolutionary movements from the region (as expressed, for example, in the Tricontinental Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement) to gesture toward the possibility of alternative pathways to modernization (Dirlik, 2007, p. 13).

An elaborate new international development infrastructure, informed by the precepts of postwar modernization theory, advanced not-so-new progress narratives. Once again the dominant story attributed Third World countries’ failure to modernize in good measure to purported cultural

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6 The term was inspired by the Third Estate of the French Revolution, which included the commoners (after the aristocracy and the clergy) (Litonjua, 2010).
limitations, with little regard to their position in a larger global order. This, even as national political leaders of many newly independent “developmentalist states” advanced projects of modernization informed by international models, if couched in nationalist terms. As with the modernizing projects of colonial powers, the governmentalization of the new development discourse unfolded through various strategies of intervention that were explicitly or implicitly sexed, gendered, classed and racialized. In South Korea, for example, the shifts and continuities from a regime of formal colonial subordination to formal national sovereignty in a global system marked by persistent power asymmetries was reflected in the transition from the system of sexual slavery created alongside the Japanese imperial military presence to the capitalist system of sex work established alongside the US military presence on the peninsula in the post-war period (Kim, 2005; Cho, 2008).

As the feminist scholars Hosu Kim and Grace M. Cho (2012) observe: “Through the 1960s and 70s military prostitution developed into a major institution for bolstering national security and became an important but unacknowledged part of South Korea’s nation-building project” (p. 10). Underscoring the paradoxically destructive and productive dimensions of conflict, they describe how the Korean War — as the first major battlefield of the Cold War — produced certain bodies as a “biopolitical excess” that underscored the contradiction between anticommunism and ethnic purity, the two central tenets of the South Korean leadership’s nation-building project. In this regard, the yanggonju, variably translated as Yankee whore, Western princess, GI bride, and UN lady, was simultaneously turned into a hyper-visible symbol in (both pro- and anti-US) nationalist discourses and a semi-clandestine figure alongside US military bases (Cho, 2008). At the same time, paradoxically, the biracial children of US soldiers and Korean women were particularly targeted by the state for placement in a fledgling industry of transnational adoption, recalling the anxieties around miscegenation of European colonial powers but now reinscribed by national leaders into ideologies of national development (Kim & Cho, 2012; Stoler, 1989 and 1997).

In India, as Jayashree Ramakrishna noted in her presentation at the Asian Regional Dialogue
(included in Volume I), the Indian National Family Planning Programme was, together with Mexico’s and China’s, one of the first population control programs established in the so-called Third World (Chatterjee & Riley, 2001; Connelly, 2006, 2008). Here again, it is worth noting the ambivalent position of national leaders advancing development projects vis-à-vis global development models that posited population control as their core in the 1970s. At the 1974 UN Conference on Population hosted at Bucharest, for instance, both India and China led developing countries in their resistance to internationally funded family planning programs. On that occasion, southern nations crafted the slogan: “Development is the best contraceptive”. However, immediately after the conference both countries established draconian fertility control programs (Corrêa & Reichmann, 1994).

In the case of India, the government launched a new national population policy in 1975, with considerable international financing from USAID and the Ford Foundation. It was regarded as a “key to development,” reflecting the neo-Malthusian global obsession with containing a feared “demographic explosion” but also projecting the image that a modern country, and within it modern families, should be able to control the “hubris” of excessive fertility, particularly in the case of poorer sectors. The alliance between new national elites advancing a vision of development and international actors resulted in a turn toward coercive measures. Between 1975 and 1977, Ramakrishna notes, the Program conducted over 8 million vasectomies, largely on poor, older, rural, and economically marginalized men, in the “none too hygienic conditions” of vasectomy camps, eventually provoking a national backlash and the defeat of the ruling government.

At the African Regional Dialogue, political scientist Sybille Nyeck situated her analysis of contemporary sexual politics in Africa against the backdrop of the complex political and policy dynamics at work in newly independent states and their contention with pressures from powerful states in the north. In her presentation (included in Volume I) Nyeck pushes back against an Africanist literature on “failed states” (with its echoes of modernization theory), while nonetheless underscoring the importance of considering the specificity of African state-formation and its limitations. Unlike European states,
which were created through protracted processes of internecine struggles, wars, economic crises, coups and counter-coups, she notes, African states acquired sovereignty largely by fiat, through acts of international recognition, and in some cases “still function without effective ownership of authority and control over administrative apparatuses”.

This history, she argues, explains the “dual pressure” faced by postcolonial African states, as they “must engage in the coercive work of state building to acquire domestic sovereignty, while behaving as if they were already mature states that can effectively respond to the demands of their societies in transition”. Nyeck traces the strategies used to confront this dual pressure, from the one-party systems that prevailed in the region immediately following independence to the formally democratic multiparty systems that have proliferated in much of the region since the 1990s. In this context, she identifies the demands of sexual rights advocates as largely “marginal issues”, which she defines in terms of their limited salience on the national political agenda. This position, she contends, contributes to the “paradox of advocacy” for sexual rights in African polities: “First, with increased activism can come increased resistance [by the state]. When the advocacy goal is perceived to be detrimental to the reputation of a state, as illustrated in human rights campaigns against torture or discrimination based on sexual orientation, the probability of coercing a targeted state into complying with human rights norms is small”. The situation is further complicated by activists’ dependence for possible solutions on the very states they are calling to account, a conundrum by no means unique to African polities.

Nyeck’s analysis of the marginalized position of sexual rights advocacy in African polities points to a larger dilemma faced by many actors in civil society in postcolonial contexts. Writing about colonial India, the historian Sudipta Sen (2002) underscores the reliance of Britain’s civilizing mission on “creating a civil society after its own image”, noting that “a colonial civil society that extended the particular history and political economy of Europe to absorb the world of the vanquished thus also placed the dependent community of the colonized outside the frame of discourse, what Enrique
Dussel has called the ‘metaphysical exteriority of peripheral cultures’” (p. 401). Echoes of this exteriorization of “peripheral cultures” persist in postcolonial contexts that mark the limits not only of state capacity, but also of the capacity of organized civil society to account fully for the lived experiences of national populations. In assessing the position of sexual rights advocates in Africa, Nyeck notes, on the one hand, the ability of activists to triangulate with international actors and deploy international norms of sexual and human rights in order to put pressure on governments, but on the other, a certain distancing of these demands from the everyday concerns of most people in the region. Of course, majoritarian assertions that “there are other priorities” are routinely deployed to deny the basic humanity of minority groups. Nyeck is careful to underscore that this is not her view or intention but rather to call for a more grounded activism, or as she puts it, a “revolution away from abstractions”. Her discussion, indeed, points to one of the central dilemmas in contemporary sexual politics raised at the dialogues: assessing the possibilities opened by democratic institutions and the language of rights in the current context of globalization and, above all, using these possibilities to link sexual rights to a broad range of economic and social issues that directly impact majorities of people.

The promise of rights

The final decades of the twentieth century saw the convergence of two developments with powerful consequences for the trajectory of sexual rights in the global South: the consolidation of an understanding of sexual and reproductive rights at the international level, as part of a larger reconfiguration of human rights frameworks; and the wave of political transitions to formal democracy that swept much of Asia, Africa and Latin America. As democratizing processes swept through these regions, the United Nations sponsored a series of conferences on the social dimensions of development and human rights. In 1993, at the International Human Rights Conference of Vienna, the rift between civil and political rights and social and economic rights that had prevailed since the end of he Second World War was overcome in conceptual terms with the recognition of the
indivisibility of human rights. That same year, the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights was established. Vienna was preceded by the Children’s Summit (New York, 1990) and the Rio Summit on the Environment (1992) and was followed by the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the Fourth World Conference on Women, (Beijing, 1995), and the World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance (Durban, 2001). Also worth noting in the course of this history was the creation in 1996 of UNAIDS as an inter-agency initiative to respond to HIV and AIDS and the first General Assembly Special Session on HIV and AIDS, held in 2001. The normative outcomes of these negotiations were cumulative in that the debates from one conference fed into the subsequent one, resulting in sharp redefinitions of human rights principles and frameworks in relation to population concerns, gender equality, racial discrimination, and human rights approaches to HIV/AIDS and sexuality itself.

The results of the series of international conferences would quite often also be translated into the policy guidelines of various UN agencies. Furthermore, after the creation of the Human Rights Council in 2005, the new body has systematically discussed definitions in respect to human rights, gender, reproductive matters and sexuality.7 In the last eight years, the Human Rights Council, Human Rights Surveillance Committees, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Special Rapporteurs have more intensively examined and debated these matters and delivered a series of relevant documents, particularly in relation to same-sex relations (O’Flaherty & Fisher, 2008; Arc International et al., 2012; United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2011). Sexual and reproductive rights activism and debates have also been at work at the level of the regional human rights systems in Europe, the Americas and Africa, albeit with uneven results across regions.

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7 The sexuality and human rights debate at the level of the UN Human Rights Council was preceded by the emblematic debates around the frustrated Brazilian resolution on sexual orientation and human rights at the level of the now extinct Commission on Human Rights (see Corrêa, Petchesky & Parker, 2008; Girard, 2007).
The implications of this trajectory for transnational constructions of gender and sexuality are by no means trivial. As noted above, gender and sexuality have been deeply interwoven with colonization and postcolonial geopolitics. From the 1980s on, gender, reproductive rights and even sexuality, as related to HIV and AIDS, became transnational issues in activism, research and policy critiques. In the 1990s, sexuality and gender erupted in UN negotiations, provoking innumerable controversies. Entirely new conditions presided over the continued geopoliticization of these issues, and the power logics and knots linking governance, sexuality and gender in the past were openly contested. The voices of many of those directly affected by global norms and policies began to be heard and the presence of non-conforming gendered and sexual subjects became visible in global policy arenas, starting with feminists, then expanding to AIDS activists, LGBT activists, and sex worker and disability rights activists.

As some states gradually began to align with these agendas, reflecting internal processes of mobilization around gender and sexuality and their impact on legal and policy frames, conservative actors began systematically using human rights language to oppose the destabilization of hegemonic gender and sexual orders (Lemaitre, 2012; Mujica, 2007; Buss & Herman, 2003). Despite these forces’ strong resistance and the ensuing controversies, by the end of the 1990s, negotiations in the UN forum delivered new normative definitions of gender equality, women’s human rights, and non-discrimination, including in relation to HIV and AIDS and the concept of sexual rights (Girard, 2012).

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8 One main source of rethinking religious doctrines in human rights language is the Vatican and groups engaged in the elaboration of Catholic Constitutionalism. Lemaitre’s (2012) description of Catholic Constitutionalism in Latin America reads as follows: “In the last decade Catholic constitutionalism has spread across the Americas ... Its advocates are not the clergy but rather the faithful lay; they are lawyers, mostly well-heeled, educated white men, who advance constitutional and human rights arguments before legislatures and courts. They defend what the Church calls the “non-negotiable issues: the criminalization of abortion, and the limitation of marriage rights to heterosexual couples. These lawyers, however, either in expensive suits or in high heels, do not cite scriptures nor do they refer to Encyclical letters. Instead, they insist on a universal natural law available to human reason, without the recourse to faith or revelation” (p. 3). Among other organizations, Catholic Constitutionalism is connected with the US-based Population Institute, Human Life International and the NGO C-Fam created in 1997 to monitor UN negotiations.
Debates on citizenship rights claims in relation to gender and sexuality had been stirring in diverse national contexts since the 1960s, yet the outcome of the UN deliberations broke boundaries, re-conceptualized these claims as universal, and in some instances brought debates back to local levels to support or trigger new demands. This circuit is one clear example that the boundaries of nation-states had become more porous as international jurisdictions expanded and political claims crossed national borders in ways that unbundled conventional ties between sovereignty, territoriality and state power (Roseneau, 1997; Sassen, 1996). To use Appadurai’s (1996) conceptual frame, the vocabulary of gender and sexuality rights became detached from relatively coherent national political and cultural public spheres and started flowing through transnational *ideoscapes*. Gender and sexuality *ideoscapes* have in some instances carried with them critiques of the masculinist, imperialist, ethnocentric, legalistic and individualist imprints of hegemonic human rights frames (Bhattacharyya, 2008; Corrêa, Petchesky, & Parker, 2008; Corrêa & Petchesky, 2007). These processes at the level of human rights discourses and norms cannot be examined in isolation from other key features that characterize globalization, including hegemonic views in relation to the role of states and markets, as we elaborate below.

The development of an international agenda around sexual and reproductive rights as an extension of a broader human rights discourse coincided in many parts of the world with political transitions to formally democratic governments. Latin America in particular saw a remarkable transformation, as the dictatorships that ruled almost every country in the 1970s gave way to formal representative democracies almost everywhere across the region by the new millennium. In sub-Saharan Africa, 70 presidential elections involving more than one candidate were held across most of the region’s 48 countries between 1989 and 2000, and by the late 1990s, 39 national legislatures had representatives

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9 Human rights treaty bodies began reviewing violations perpetrated by states in relation to gender and sexuality more systematically. Specific cases have also been brought to the attention of these bodies, resulting in groundbreaking decisions and recommendations, such as the conclusion of the Toonen vs. Australia case (1994), when the Committee on Humans Rights that monitors the Convention on Civil and Political Rights concluded that the sodomy law in place in the state of Tasmania infringed the treaty.
from at least two parties (Van de Walle, 2002; Ochieng, 2012). In Asia, where China in particular remains an important counterweight to this international trend, societal mobilization nonetheless led to the consolidation of electoral democracies in several countries, including South Korea, the Philippines, East Timor, Mongolia, Nepal, Indonesia and more recently Myanmar (Thompson, 2001; Yun-han, 2006; Diamond, 1997; 2012).

Participants at the dialogues focused attention on the implications of this convergence of international norms with democratic reforms in various countries. While in some cases this juncture has undeniably opened possibilities for the formal recognition of sexual and reproductive rights, the entanglement of emerging norms with the tradition of liberalism and the power asymmetries of the global system has also complicated the political terrain that sexual rights advocates have to navigate. The deployment of liberal feminist and sexual rights frames to justify projects of military intervention in the context of the so-called War on Terror has paradoxically strengthened opponents in many countries who frame these rights as a neocolonial imposition while obscuring local and national traditions that might provide alternative bases of support (Amar, 2013; Puar, 2007). Moreover, the formal recognition of these rights in societies where they are routinely negated in practice casts doubt on the real possibilities they offer, even in the best of circumstances.

Examples can undoubtedly be cited in Asia, Africa and Latin America where national transitions of formal democracy created propitious conditions for activist mobilization and the recognition of sexual and reproductive rights. The political ferment that drove Brazil’s transition to democracy in the 1970s and 1980s, for example, saw broad-based mobilization by women, gays, lesbians, travestis, prostitutes, and people living with HIV, many framing contestation of the sex–gender order as part of a larger project of economic, political and cultural transformation. Much of that energy would be directed toward influencing the Constitution of 1988, a foundational document that for the first time established formal equality between men and women and laid the basis for important subsequent reforms (Tabak, 1989; CFEMEA, 2006; Htun, 2003; Vianna & Lacerda, 2004; de la Dehesa, 2010).
In South Africa as well, in part reflecting the mobilization of women and gay activists within and outside the African National Congress, the Constitution of 1996 asserted the state’s responsibility to ensure women’s political and socioeconomic equality, created the Commission on Gender Equality, and became the first in the world to include an antidiscrimination clause that included sexual orientation, among other forms of discrimination (Hames, 2006; Gouws, 2004; Yarbrough, 2013; Reddy, 2001; Hassim, 2007). Similarly, in Nepal’s protracted history of political reform, women played an important role in the People’s Movement and the People’s Liberation Army, which fought in the country’s decade-long civil war. The interim constitution, in force since 2007, recognized women’s right to reproductive health and instituted protections from violence and discrimination against women (Cottrell, 2008; Women’s Caucus of the Constituent Assembly, 2010). Moreover, in a landmark ruling that same year, the Supreme Court recognized the rights of sexual and gender minorities, calling for the elimination of discriminatory laws in the country, the establishment of a commission to study same-sex marriage, and official recognition of a third gender category contemplating the country’s *metis* (Divan & Narain, 2007: Pant & Standing, 2011).¹⁰

Each of these cases reflects complex and distinct national histories requiring closer consideration, but taken together they suggest certain commonalities as well. On one level, they speak to the political opportunities that transitions to formal democracy in many countries (though certainly not everywhere) have opened to sexual rights activists. In these moments of enormous change and uncertainty, generally punctuated by the revision of foundational documents (constitutions, civil and criminal codes, municipal organic laws, etc.), activists have been able to attain formal achievements, particularly by articulating ties with other social movements and framing their demands as part of a larger project of political transformation. Universalist discourses of citizenship and human rights have often been central to this type of coalition-building. In her presentation at the African Regional

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¹⁰ See also http://www.bds.org.np/index.html.
Dialogue, Sybille Nyeck stressed precisely the need for sexual rights advocates on the continent to articulate their demands with other agendas in civil society if they are to find greater resonance in societies and move from the “margins” to the center of political debate. While coalition-building has proven important to increasing political support for sexual rights, counter-majoritarian institutions such as electoral systems with proportional representation, party and parliamentary quotas for women, and court systems have also proven important in some cases to ensuring sexual rights advocates a political voice and protecting these rights against majoritarian veto. At the Interregional Dialogue, for example, Malu Marin underscored the importance of a recent ruling by the Supreme Court of the Philippines granting accreditation to the LGBT political party, Ang Ladlad, overturning an earlier decision by the national Commission on Elections that rejected the party’s petition on the grounds of alleged immorality. Spanning both new and well-established democracies, recent high court rulings have also been pivotal to guaranteeing women’s inheritance rights under customary law in Botswana and loosening restrictions on abortion in Colombia, among many examples that might be cited.

Yet political transitions to formal democracy have not created such openings in all instances. Indeed, as various participants at the dialogues noted, such political reforms have in many cases created difficulties for sexual rights advocacy by fostering the political mobilization of opponents, especially those grounding their opposition in conservative interpretations of religion, who often have the capacity to mobilize a much larger political base. Such dynamics were evident, for example, in the tightening of abortion legislation in Nicaragua, where, just prior to the 2006 election, the national congress, dominated by the center-left Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) and the right-wing Liberal Constitucionalist Party (PLC), voted unanimously to abolish a stipulation in the 1893 criminal code permitting abortion in cases when pregnancy poses a risk to a woman’s health. Despite petitions by feminists, the Health Ministry, and the medical community to delay the vote until after the election, both parties precipitated the process to curry favor with the Catholic Church (Kampwirth, 2003; Motenegro, 2006; Gago, 2007; Kane. 2008). The legal theorist Juan
Marco Vaggione, in his presentation at the Latin American Dialogue (included in the first Volume) underscored the challenges posed to sexual rights advocates by the new legitimacy of the Catholic Church and of other conservative religious voices positioning themselves more broadly as civil society actors in the region’s emerging democracies.

Moreover, such celebratory accounts of formal achievements generally obscure much more than they reveal, and while several participants at the dialogues underscored the continued salience of the language of rights, they generally did so with a critical eye to its limitations and contradictions. For one, a narrow focus on debates unfolding in national public spheres too easily reifies dominant nationalisms and understandings of gender and sexuality in the singular. This dilemma relates to some of the limitations of a politics based on “floating identities” mentioned above, as formal debates in national public spheres can obscure the heterogeneous landscapes structuring relations of gender and sexuality at the level of everyday life (Crenshaw, 2000).

At the Asian Regional Dialogue, for example, Khartini Slamah cited the importance of the Declaration of Transgender Rights in Asia and the Pacific, a statement firmly grounded in international human rights accords, as the basis for framing a politics of recognition for transgender people in the region. While appealing to a global language to make visible a population generally ignored in public policy is necessary and probably politically inevitable in the current global landscape, Slamah also acknowledged the slippage between transgender identity as an abstract category and the lived experiences of people whose lives that category purports to represent. Indeed, participants at that meeting expressed a more general frustration about the injunction to ground human rights claims in fixed identities, with all their limitations, while at the same time recognizing the greater efficacy in the region of articulating claims in this way, as compared to discourses that eschew identity categories such as the banner of “sexual diversity”. Among other things, this dilemma underscores activism’s close entanglement with prevailing technologies of governamentality, as civil society actors come to adopt the language of the state and mirror its logic.
It is important to recognize that many of these observations reflect dynamics that are not peculiar to sexual politics. Rather, they recall longstanding Marxist and feminist critiques underscoring how the structures of national (as well as international) public spheres constrain debate and limit access in ways that both reproduce and obscure underlying power asymmetries in societies at large. It is important to recognize the ways in which organized sectors of civil society have successfully challenged unjust social exclusions, expanding the boundaries of public debate through rights-based claims-making. Nonetheless, what counts as “civil society” in the first place (what modes of organization are recognized; what language gets heard) is itself significantly structured by social inequalities and constrained by the prevailing discursive parameters of political debate.

These broader critiques of democratic public spheres have relevance for recent transitions to formal democracy as well. Such processes of political reform almost never result in the foundation of an entirely new polity (though they are often mythologized as such). Rather, they generally unfold in uneven and partial ways, through processes that involve pact-making, negotiation, conflict, and repression among diverse sectors within both authoritarian governments and opposition forces. The new democracies that emerge from these transitions often retain significant elements of outgoing regimes and institute measures designed specifically to safeguard private property and other bases of entrenched social power (O’Donnell & Schmitter, 1986).

These contradictions were made poignantly clear at the Interregional Dialogue in the presentation by activist Hossam Baghat, from the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, on the first phase of the Egyptian popular revolution (2011–2013). Baghat (2011) underscored the palpable, if ephemeral, sense of unity felt within the opposition in the days leading up to the ouster of Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak in February 2011:

Everybody was feeling togetherness for a moment, and it is this togetherness that people are now missing. There was this moment when we gained access to Tahrir Square, Mubarak
was still in power so we were united and we were all one. We were all one not in a theoretical or abstract sense but we all coexisted. We were all overwhelmed by love for each other. And now, in an almost childlike way, we are saying, where did the love go? We are unclear about the future of the country.  

This uncertainty regarding Egypt’s future was reflected in Baghat’s ambivalent assessment of the political juncture in which Egyptian activists found themselves at the time. On the one hand, Baghat cited reasons for optimism in the widespread expressions of civic engagement, volunteerism, and youth organizing inspired by the revolution and how this moment of apparent (though fleeting) democratic reform seemed to open up potential spaces for new political voices, including those of sexual rights advocates. Nonetheless, he also underscored the “huge discrepancy” between the expectations awakened by the revolution and the political reforms that had been instituted since Mubarak’s ouster: “Protests may have removed a president, but really the regime is still being dismantled in almost the same incremental ways that we witnessed under Mubarak. We have to use litigation and advocacy and public mobilization for every move”. He further noted the difficult transition within the transition, as opposition sectors refocused their attention from toppling a dictator to the difficult task of institution building, often splintering into various interest groups attempting “to elbow their issues into the decidedly limited space for public debate”. The military coup of 2013, of course, vividly illustrated how precarious the opening represented by such moments of political reform can be in reality.

Participants at the Latin American Dialogue expressed a similar frustration with the limits of democratization. In particular, the historical anthropologist, Elsa Muñiz from Mexico, highlighted the different political realities experienced at the state level. The protracted and partial process

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11 This quoting comes from the transcript of Hossam Baghat presentation at a public debate that took place in Rio during the 2011 SPW Inter-Regional Dialogue.
of democratic reform that resulted in the defeat of the presidential candidate of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in 2000 broke its grip on the federal executive after 70 years of hegemonic party rule (if only briefly, with its return to the presidency 12 years later, aided by longstanding ties with Mexico’s dominant media conglomerates). This juncture in national politics produced an array of political coalitions and possibilities for sexual rights advocates at the local level. As Muñiz observed, such disparities were particularly evident on the question of abortion. After the Mexico City Legislative Assembly decriminalized abortion in the first trimester in 2007, a measure whose constitutionality was upheld by the national Supreme Court the following year, 18 states responded by tightening restrictions on abortion, in some states following up with arrests of women who had undergone the procedure. This remarkably rapid backlash to the Mexico City law, in some cases involving amendments to state constitutions recognizing the personhood of the fetus after little or no debate, reflected the close political coordination among PRI lawmakers, legislators with the right-wing National Action Party, and Catholic authorities. Muñiz cited this example as illustrative of the “paradoxes” created by “a hyper-democratic discourse that recognizes diversity and defends the rule of law, while at the same time constantly exercising force with impunity through various government bodies”.

The paradoxes Muñiz described speak not just to the limits of democratization but also to the fragmented and often contradictory nature of the state more generally (democratic or not). In this regard, her analysis evokes recent theorizing that approaches the state not as a unified structure but as “the powerful metaphysical effect of practices that make such structures appear to exist” (Mitchell, 1991b, p. 94). By focusing not on how the state sees the world (as James Scott would have it) but on how the world sees the state, this approach highlights the shifting and provisional boundaries between the state and society as well as the powerful concentration of symbolic capital that permits the state to be instantiated simultaneously as “objectivity, in the form of specific organizational structures and mechanisms, and subjectivity in the form of mental structures and categories of perception and thought” (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 4). The ultimate picture of the state that
emerges, then, “is one of messiness rather than smooth functioning, one of power rather than neutrality, one of tensions between power and resistance rather than outright domination, and one of variability rather than fixity” (Kim-Puri, 2005, p. 146). While undoubtedly applicable to other contexts, this approach seems particularly salient today in light of contemporary transformations in governamentality promoted by neoliberal formulas. We return to the present juncture below.