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Globalisation and education for sustainable development: exploring the global in motion

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The article explores education for sustainable development (ESD) as a policy concept in different spaces and how it is re-articulated as part of a process of globalisation. The objective is to explore empirically an alternative set of logics in order to conceive of this process of globalisation. With this objective in mind, the article investigates articulations of ESD and sustainable development in Vietnamese and Thai policy-making, and reflects upon how these articulations can be seen to relate to globalisation. In so doing, it addresses concerns about the globalising potential of ESD within the field of environmental education research, and aims to open up for an alternative understanding of the processes associated with the rearticulation of ESD in different national education policy settings. The alternative conception that is put forward promotes an understanding of these re-articulations of ESD as contingent, opening up a space for contestation and counter-hegemonic articulations.

Keywords: globalization; globalisation; policy; logic; ESD; Vietnam; Thailand

Introduction

The overall ambition of this article is to explore a number of alternative conceptual logics for globalisation that place the phenomenon in the context of education for sustainable development (ESD) policy-making and research, and to see what alternate knowledge-producing capacities they entail.¹ With regard to the field of environmental education research, the article aims to explore empirically alternative means of conceiving of globalisation in the context of the discussion of ESD. Previous conceptions of the phenomenon of globalisation in environmental education research have in a number of instances appealed to logics of correspondence – in other words, a number of studies have aimed to uncover or implicitly appealed to a notion of essence of ESD. This logic of correspondence can be seen to be derived from critical social theory and to differentiate between different scales, spaces and hierarchies among them in order to provide universal reference points of historical development as an unfolding of a universal process of globalisation (Ferguson 2005; Giddens 1990; Hay 2005). According to this logic, the concrete articulation of ESD with its contextual specificity is corresponding to another overarching scale (the global) (e.g. Sauv  , Brunelle, and Berryman, 2005, 273f), where the determinate, universal aspects, that is to say the globalised aspects, of ESD are to be found. Especially with regard to issues of global power, studies within the field of environmental

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education research and beyond have drawn upon a notion of globalisation that feeds on a logic of determination in order to warn about the power of globalisation to homogenise the national and the local context (Jickling 2005; Jickling and Wals 2008; Sauvé, Brunelle, and Berryman 2005; Sumner 2005).

In order to empirically reflect on and feed into alternate conceptions of the relationship between ESD and globalisation, the exploration of the alternative conceptual logics in the fourth part of this article provides insights into globalisation as a process that is not *a priori* determined. These alternate logics have been provided by Buenfil-Burgos (2009) and are by the authors of this paper applied in the analysis of Vietnamese and Thai policy documents on ESD, education, socio-economic development and sustainable development (SD). The paper then reflects on which alternate understanding of globalisation these logics allow for by comparing these 'national' articulations in these documents with those in the 'global' United Nation's framework for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). These explorations aim to contribute to the field of environmental education research through empirically exploring logics that displace the logics of determination and correspondence with the logics of imbrication, displacement and *aporia* in order to conceive of globalisation in the context of policy-making for ESD and SD. The aim is not to present any of the conceptual logics as best able to accurately capture the phenomenon of globalisation in the context of ESD policy development, but rather to empirically and conceptually develop further alternative entry points to the discussion of ESD as part of a global movement among different spaces, while incorporating its complexities and national variations (Gough 2009, 2013; González-Gaudiano 2005).

The alternative conceptual logics that are to be explored were provided by Buenfil-Burgos (2009) and have been earlier elaborated by the authors (Bengtsson and Östman 2013) in the context of ESD. However, before these logics are elaborated, the following section places them within the context of the ESD debate within environmental education research. The objective is to show that a specific set of logics, those of determination and correspondence, are by a number of scholars within environmental education research habitually appealed to in the conception of globalisation and how these habitual logics can be seen to share certain historical trajectories which frame how change, power and Being are conceived. The empirical section of this article explores the explanatory capacities of the alternate logics of globalisation as provided by Buenfil-Burgos (2009) by applying them to the context of Vietnamese and Thai policy-making as well as the DESD framework.

Conceptions of globalisation in the field of environmental education research

In the field of ESD and environmental education (EE), research dealing with the promotion of the DESD in various national contexts and criticism of the globalising potential of ESD has in a number of cases associated globalisation with the dispersion of neoliberalist ideologies (Jickling 2005; Jickling and Wals 2008; Sauvé, Brunelle, and Berryman 2005; Sumner 2005). These studies see ESD as contributing to globalisation as a form of homogenisation by providing prescriptive formulas that diminish the conceptual space for self-determination, alternative ways of thinking and autonomy. While the explication of the logics used to conceive of globalisation is often limited, arguments are often gathered from the broader globalisation debate. Sumner (2005, 2008) refers to 'corporate' globalisation, which incorporates

structures and processes that increase the wealth of an elite group of people. Globalisation in these critiques of ESD is associated with ideology and economy (Jickling 2005; Jickling and Wals 2008; Sauvé, Brunelle, and Berryman 2005; Sumner 2008).

The logic of correspondence is by us interpreted to be constitutive for these conceptions of globalisation as the argument by which globalisation is conceived relies upon a logic that appeals to a point of correspondence and that this reference point is shared by a variety of national approaches to ESD. An example of this logic of correspondence can be found in the appeal to ‘global trends’ (Sauvé, Brunelle and Berryman 2005, 274) or ‘ideological orientations’ (Jickling 2005, 251). Correspondence translates in this conception into a form of universal reference points that guarantees comparability among different spaces or contexts. The logic of determination is by us seen to be constitutive for the conceptions and how they understand the changes that are associated with globalisation as process. The logic of determination is at work in two figures of reasoning in these conceptions. It is, on the one hand, involved in the relations of causality by which globalisation and exchanges between different spaces and scales are conceived. Appeals to causality are made in the form of appeals to ‘influences’, ‘causes’, ‘consequences’ (Sauvé, Brunelle and Berryman 2005, 273f), ‘affects’ (Jickling 2005, 251) and ‘effects’ (Sumner 2008, 91) in order to conceive of globalisation and its relation to environmental education. While some of these authors can be interpreted to soften these causal explanations of global exchanges by inserting the possibility of choice by different social actors at various levels and scales (Sauvé, Brunelle and Berryman 2005, 274), the logic of determination becomes especially prominent in appeals to ‘power’ (Jickling 2005, 251; Sumner 2008, 91). Sumner (2008, 91) exemplifies in her definition of power how causality and notions of power draw on a logic of determination where power is defined as: “production of intended effects” (25). Institutional power, then is the production of intended effects by institutions’. Power is in this understanding associated with determinate effects, where the power of globalisation becomes a process of change that represents a realisation of a priori determined outcomes.

While the authors sympathise with the entailed warnings about neoliberalist capitalism’s influences and effects on national education systems as put forward by these scholars and others (Hursh and Henderson 2011; Le Grange 2009; Lotz-Sisitka 2010; Payne 2010; Stevenson 2007), we believe it is important to complement the reasoning outlined above, since its constitution of globalisation limits the ability to highlight how the political moment, as appealed to by (Sauvé, Brunelle and Berryman 2005, 274), can emerge in the local and national context, as moments of decisions and conflicts of interest. This limit as we have argued elsewhere (Bengtsson and Östman 2013) can be seen to result out of an appeal to logics of determination and correspondence that see globalisation as an a priori determined phenomenon, that is to say that we already know that investment in or appeals to ESD will entail certain effects on education.

We see our efforts to compliment these warnings to be partially in line with conceptions of globalisation as they have been put forward by Gough (2009, 2013), as we are also drawing on Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) notion of rhizome in order to conceive on the complexities of the phenomenon and its contingency. In line with Gough (2013, 36), we (Bengtsson and Östman 2013; Bengtsson 2014) argue that globalisation can be associated with, both, homogenisation and heterogenisation. Hence, we interpret him to share our argument for not a priori confining the phenomenon to a necessary outcome, and to abandon appeals to causality and a logic of

determination. Further, we readily share Gough's (2013, 40) commitment to Turnbull's (1997, 553) approach towards conceiving of global interactions as to referring to 'activities involved in producing knowledge in particular social spaces, that is on the contingent processes of making assemblages and linkages, of creating spaces in which knowledge is possible'. However, our approach can be seen to differ as it appeals to a notion of space as essentially overdetermined and fragmented (cf. Bengtsson 2014). As a result, we problematise the cohesiveness of spaces as product as well as the act of producing spaces. A conception of contested space that we believe to share with González-Gaudiano (2005). It is the impossibility of this cohesiveness, which we conceive of in terms of quasi-ontological antagonism (Laclau 1990; Laclau and Mouffe 1985), that we interpret to require practices of naming and knowledge production in the first places. For us, globalisation represents not an exchange *between* closed or cohesive systems – for example, knowledge systems (cf. Gough 2013) – but to be characterised by constant political struggle over meaning *within* and *among* particular spaces. Hence, it is with this outlook in mind that this article investigates how the articulation of ESD is characterised by differences in meaning-making, where we see these differences to not only characterise relations among spaces but see these constitutive differences to be characteristic for particular spaces.

In order to conceive of these differences and resulting social antagonisms within and among spaces, the article will engage in a comparison between actual policy-making on SD and ESD in Vietnam and Thailand. The focus of this empirical engagement and comparison will be on the political aspects of contestation of the meaning of SD and ESD within and among spaces.

Alternative logics of globalisation

As already mentioned, the authors (Bengtsson 2014; Bengtsson and Östman 2013) have already explored a constitutive perspective on globalisation by drawing on Laclau and Mouffe (1985) discourse analytical framework. In the following, the key characteristics of this constitutive perspective on globalisation are briefly summarised to highlight the logics drawn upon to frame globalisation. It is crucial to highlight that Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theoretical outlook does not try to look beyond the particular to identify regulating forces. They do not rely on a logic of correspondence, but instead focus on the particular practices by which order is established in meaning-making processes. For them, order is not a necessity caused by a singular-evolving process, that is to say they do not appeal to a notion of an unfolding of a universality. Instead, they see order, or 'hegemony', as a temporary result of action that builds upon the active exclusion of other possibilities. By depicting ESD as an empty signifier, González-Gaudiano (2005) was able to adumbrate how at the national space a certain policy concept, seemingly polysemic, can contribute to the establishment of hegemony. Buenfil-Burgos' (2000, 2009) conceptualisation of globalisation as connection, together with her formulation of the three logics of imbrication, displacement and aporia, provide conceptual and analytical entry points for conceiving of globalisation as a contingent and political process resulting out of a diversity of political practices in various spaces.

Buenfil-Burgos's logics of relationship and movement among spaces can be seen as informed by the conception of rhizomic globalisation. The rhizomic conception

of territorial movement (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1987) entails a mutual process of deterritorialisation – as imposition – and a process of reterritorialisation – as appropriation. For the purposes of the next section's exploration, this means that the introduction of the concept of ESD into a territoriality, as a process of deterritorialisation, is understood to be inseparable from the process of reterritorialisation as part of the articulation of the concept in the socio-historical context produced in a specific space. This conception of movement between different spaces entails a focus on the *changes in Being* that take place due to the processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation.² Globalisation thereby becomes a contingent phenomenon.

The second part of the next section is aimed at empirically exploring this set of alternative logics of globalisation that have been provided by Buenfil-Burgos (2009) and to see how they allow us to conceive the political aspect of the articulation of ESD and SD in and among different spaces. These logics focus on the territorial movements that globalisation entails, where this movement is conceived through the logics of imbrication, displacement and aporia. In our exploration, these alternative logics are put into play to empirically engage with the circulation process of ESD in various contexts. According to Buenfil-Burgos (2009), the logic of imbrication denotes the territorial relationship of a systematic overlapping at the edges. This overlapping, e.g. of various national ESD policies, aims to portray how particularity and similarity can be conceived in the various national policies. It also aims to show how that which is compared is constituted by differences but at the same time seen as equivalent. As with hybridity, the logic of imbrication denotes something close to a status of indigenous foreigner (cf. Popkewitz 2005) and points towards a process of appropriation. This phenomenon of change as part of the movement between spaces is captured in the logic of displacement, which denotes a supplementarity (Derrida 1987) that is seen as a result of difference of Being in repetition or *re-articulation* in context. The authors interpret the logic of displacement, according to Buenfil-Burgos' definition, to suggest that every move of deterritorialisation or introduction of policy concepts such as ESD is inevitably repositioned, that is to say reterritorialised, in regard to the existent discursive formation of a particular signifying system, and that the policy concept thereby attains a hybrid character. The authors interpret Buenfil-Burgos' conception of aporia to underline the productive character of the tension and conflict that emerges in and among the articulations connecting different spaces. The incompatibility between the value systems that characterise different spaces can make a single meaning of, for example, ESD impossible, which in turn can create value conflicts. With regard to globalisation, therefore, aporia deals with the multiplicity and non-correspondence of Being as it is relative to a spaces and the potential-for-becoming in movements among spaces.

In the following section, the authors will be exploring these logics in order to conceive the global movement of ESD as policy concept in the context of how ESD is articulated in the DESD framework as well as in Vietnamese and Thai policies development for ESD and sustainable development.

Exploring the logics of globalisation

ESD as a process of becoming

In order to make the analyses of imbrication, displacement and aporia intelligible, it is important to specify how the authors analyse connections among different

articulations. Connections can be seen to be remainders of territorial movements. They can be seen to exist, in both explicit and implicit forms in articulations within different spaces, that is to say articulations in different discursive formations. Explicit connections can take the shape of references to other articulations, e.g. references to other documents or oral statements within a particular articulation. However, implicit connections can also exist among articulations that do not reference to another. Such implicit connections can be seen to exist when a comparison between two and more articulations shows similarity of their patterns. Based on this conception of connection, it is possible to compare two instances of articulation of ESD as expressions of two different spaces.

In order to find an entry point for our exploration of the alternative logics of globalisation and to explore the implications of an understanding of globalisation as connection, we use a potential explicit connection in a Vietnamese ESD policy document with various other spaces. The Vietnamese *National Action Plan for ESD* (VNCDESD 2010, 3) states:

As a member of the United Nations and UNESCO, Viet Nam has and will continue its active involvements in activities under the framework of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

This statement articulates an explicit connection between the Vietnamese national action plan and the framework of the DESD as formulated in the forum of UNESCO. Key documents articulating this framework include the *Framework of the UNDESD International Implementation Scheme (FIIS)* (UNESCO 2006) and the *International Implementation Scheme (IIS)* (UNESCO 2005). If we interpret this reference to the framework as an explicit connection established through articulation in different spaces, it might be possible to reflect on the relation between the two spaces that has shaped these two articulations. This relation among spaces might be conceived in terms of powers of influence (logic of determination and correspondence), where the relation between two spaces might lead to homogenisation or heterogenisation depending on which spaces, or actors within that space, is associated with power. Indicators for one of these forms of influence might be established with regard to similarities and differences provided by a comparison between two chronologically divergent articulations of ESD. Chronologically divergent in this regard refers to two sequentially separated events, where event A might or might not have an impact on subsequent event B. As it is shown in this article the effects, or relationship, will differ depending on the focus of the comparison. A comparison shows that 12 of the 15 strategic themes (perspectives) stated in the strategic summary of the DESD framework (UNESCO 2006, 2) are also stated as central themes for ESD in the Vietnamese National Action Plan (VNCDESD 2010, 6), which articulates a total of 17 themes. Themes appearing in both include: rural development, sustainable urbanization, climate change, human rights, disaster prevention, gender equality and HIV/AIDS. Based on this comparison, it might be concluded that the DESD framework, articulated in the 'global space', to some extent determined the re-articulation of ESD in the Vietnamese National Action Plan. Additional significant equivalences are also found to exist between the articulation of objectives for the DESD in Vietnam (cf. UNESCO 2006, 26; VNCDESD 2010, 8ff) and in the DESD framework, e.g. awareness raising on SD-related issues, as well as means of implementation. Based on this equivalence, it might be concluded that the circulation of ESD within different national spaces as part of globalisation represents a universal phenomenon.

However, if the Vietnamese National Action Plan (VNCDESD 2010) as a whole is considered, not only with a focus on similarities or equivalences, the reader might become aware of significant differences in the articulation of the respective documents. These become especially apparent in the context of the role of ESD in a broader Vietnamese socio-economic development. For example, the Vietnamese National Action Plan (VNCDESD 2010, 5f) states that:

In the first half of the Decade, education has increased the people's intelligence, trained manpower, and made active contributions to the cause of industrialization, modernization of the country, aiming at meeting the requirements of all-round growth of Viet Nam in the context of international integration and globalization. Besides, the first half of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development has also seen major challenges to the role and quality of education. Although it has achieved lots of progresses, the education system is more of theoretical education, with slow renovation in educational contents and teaching methods being made.

While the FIIS of the DESD (UNESCO 2006) does not promote ESD as a means to international integration, industrialisation or modernisation, similarities between the above reference and the *Vietnamese 2001–2010 Education Development Strategic Plan* (EDSP) (MoET Vietnam 2001) become evident with regard to the guiding principles outlined for the education sector. The EDSP (MoET Vietnam 2001, 16f) states that:

3.1. Education is the foremost National Policy.

Education is the foundation, the highly qualified human resources are one of the important driving forces that accelerate the industrialisation and modernization process, the basic factor for social development, rapid and sustainable economic growth.

3.2. Education should make one step in advance to improve mass knowledge, to train manpower and to nurture the talents in order to carry out successfully the socio-economic strategic goals.

3.3. The guiding idea of the Education Development Strategic Plan for period 2001–2010 is to overcome the shortages in many aspects; [...] to create the basis for significant enhancement of quality and effectiveness of education; to serve actively industrialization, modernization and the prosperity of the country, to make our country develop rapidly in a sustainable manner, to keep pace with other developed countries in the region and on the world in a short time.

We argue how the observed differences between the global DESD framework and concrete national policies are conceived will depend on the logics that are appealed to in the analyses. An appeal to a logic of correspondence and determination will ultimately see the similarities as indicators of power and influence, that is the re-emergence of a global ESD within Vietnamese policy-making. According to such an understanding, differences will be perceived as degenerate or blurring side-effects in a complex yet a priori determined global process of dispersion, homogenisation or mere ornaments of an original ESD.

However, if we conceive of the portrayed differences in our alternative perspective the quoted articulations of ESD in Vietnamese policy to indicate that these articulation do add something different to ESD, we might conceive of the process of globalisation differently. We argue, based on our conceptual logics, that this difference can be interpreted as representing a process of aligning the concept of ESD to existing contextual formations or to the specificity of the space that it articulated against. This constitutive difference alongside similarity is then by us not seen to be

an *essential* deviation, as a deviation or loss of purity from origin in the global, but is instead, based on our underlying theoretical perspective, seen as *supplementary*, as *adding something in order to replace*. The observed differences in the comparisons are then seen as a process of *becoming*, as the death of the ESD of the DESD and the emergence of a Vietnamese ESD not as an imperfect copy but as something else.

ESD and the logics of imbrication, displacement and aporia

In the following analyses, the authors elaborate in more detail how this becoming can be conceived through appeals to logics of imbrication, displacement and aporia.

Logic of imbrication

To continue our discussion above, a closer reading of Vietnamese policy shows that the meaning of ESD can be seen to be deferred to the signifier of sustainable development in the Vietnamese action plan for ESD. The Vietnamese *National Action Plan for ESD* (VNCDESD 2010, 3) initially states that:

The implementation of Decade of Education for Sustainable Development requires us to change our perspectives on education, change and improve educational programs (i.e., objectives, contents and approaches, etc.), develop new ways of thinking towards sustainable development aspects so as to successfully implement basic elements in 3 pillars of sustainable development: culture-society, environment and economy.

The authors interpret the quote to underline that, in order to make statements of the meaning, or being, of ESD, it is necessary to acknowledge that its meaning is deferred to the articulation of the meaning of SD. This deferral of the role and also meaning of ESD can also be seen at work in the division between Vietnamese ESD policy and SD policy, since the national action plan for ESD holds that it aims basically to fulfil the Vietnamese SD objectives as defined in the *Vietnam Agenda 21* (GoV 2004). The above-assumed process of reterritorialisation as part of the movement of ESD into the Vietnamese context can be seen to be initiated by the contextual alignment. In the case of the *Vietnamese National Action Plan for ESD* (VNCDESD 2010), the meaning of ESD is interpreted to be deferred to or *displaced* by the meaning of SD in the national context or with regard to the specificity of that space.

The above comparison between the *Vietnamese National Action Plan for ESD* (VNCDESD 2010) and the global UNDESD framework (UNESCO 2005, 2006) is interpreted to exemplify how the logic of imbrication is able to capture how the first-glance meaning of ESD seems to have significant similarities, and how these similarities to a large extent dissolve into particularities, which become evident in the historical and cultural embedment of the concept of SD. To start with the case of Vietnamese policy-making for SD, the framing of SD in the *Vietnam Agenda 21* (GoV 2004, 5) shows how the associated three dimensions of social, economic and environmental development are re-articulated:

The views about sustainable development are reaffirmed in the documents of 9th National Communist Party Congress and the Strategy for Socio-economic Development in the period 2001–2010 stating that ‘fast, effective and sustainable development, economic growth should occur in parallel with the implementation of social progress

and equality and environmental protection’ and ‘socio economic development is closely tied to environmental protection and improvement, ensuring harmony between the artificial and natural environment and preserving bio-diversity’.

What the above quote highlights is the active association of the concept of sustainability with broader Vietnamese socio-economic policy, that is to say the *Strategy for Socio-Economic Development in the period 2001–2010* (CCCPV 2001). This alignment is highlighted in the following passage from the *Vietnam Agenda 21* (GoV 2004, 6), which shows that SD does not replace prior formations within policy discourse, but concretises, or ‘re-articulates’ them.

The Strategic Orientation for Sustainable Development in Vietnam cannot replace existing strategies, overall planning and plans, but serves as a basis to concretise the socio-economic development strategy in the period 2000–2010, the National Strategy for Environmental Protection Until 2010 and the visions towards 2020 and to develop the 5-year plan 2006–2010 and overall development strategies and plans for sectors and localities with a view to acquiring close, reasonable, harmonious combination of economic development, social progress and equality and environmental protection and ensuring the country’s sustainable development.

The following comparison between the role of SD in broader policy formations in Vietnam and Thailand highlights how in both contexts SD is not articulated as a self-contained concept defining national policy. Instead, SD is ultimately described as a compatible end-state of development based on context-dependent and historically evolved formations in policy discourse. These policy formations can already be centred around other key policy concepts, such as ‘harmonious development’ or ‘socialist-oriented market economy’ in the Vietnamese context (cf. GoV 2004).

In Thailand, as the quote below shows, the concept of sustainable development is associated with the concept of sufficiency economy at the policy level as well as in other social sectors (Mongsawad 2009). Thailand’s *10th National Economic and Social Development Plan* (2007–2011) (ONSEDB 2007, 2) states:

A new development paradigm that focused on ‘people-centered development’ was therefore brought into use, and the economy was employed as a tool to enhance happiness and quality of life. At the same time, the segmented approach to development was replaced by a holistic approach to development, with more opportunities for all sectors to participate in every stage of development. The new paradigm is under the principles of ‘Sufficiency Economy’ to which His Majesty has adhered since his ascension to the throne. The philosophy is in accordance with the Thai way of life and will lead to sustainable development of the nation.

A comparison of the articulations of SD in Vietnamese and Thai policy show similarities; both articulate that the relationship between the economy and other aspects of national development are to be changed. The Thai policy uses ‘holistic’ to describe the new, desired relationship, and the Vietnamese policy uses the term ‘harmonious’. At first glance, it appears that the Thai concept of a ‘holistic’ approach to development can be seen as in line with ‘holistic’ approaches to ESD, as frequently called for in the DESD framework (FIIS) (UNESCO 2006). However, the next quote makes it clear that this envisioned change deviates significantly from the formulation in the DESD framework (FIIS) (UNESCO 2006), or the *Agenda 21* (UNDESA 1992). In the *10th Thai National Economic and Social Development Plan*, ‘sustainability’ is interchangeable with, or attains meaning through, the concept of ‘sufficiency’:

The Ninth Plan (2002–2006) adopted the Sufficiency Economy philosophy to guide the development and administration of the country, at the same time as continuing the holistic approach to people-centered development from the Eighth Plan. The plan prioritized solutions to problems arising from the economic crisis in order to build an economy with strong internal foundations and resilience to external changes, while aiming for balanced development with respect to people, society, economy, and environment in order to achieve sustainable development and the well-being of the Thai people. (ONSEDB 2007, ii)

While sustainable development can be seen as a form of state, sufficiency economy is used to describe the end state strived for. Sufficiency economy is defined as follows:

(1.1) The principle of ‘sufficiency’, which consists of three qualities must be strictly adhered to. The first quality is ‘reasonableness’. It must be used to analyze and make sense of the situation of the country with respect to strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities. This way, it is possible to select what is appropriate for national development and for coping with threats. Reasonableness leads to ‘moderation’ which must be used in decision-making to create a balance between self-reliance and competitive capability in the world market and between rural and urban society. A self-immunity system must be built into economic systems through risks management in order to handle the impact of changes both inside and outside the country. (ONSEDB 2007, 39)

It has to be stated that reasonableness, moderation and self-immunity are not mentioned in either the *DESD Framework for the International Implementation Scheme (FIIS)* (UNESCO 2006) or *Agenda 21* (UNDESA 1992) as means of assuring sustainable development and that sufficiency is only used in the *Agenda 21* to refer to ‘self-sufficiency’ in food production (UNDESA 1992, § 17.87), in low-energy technology (UNDESA 1992, § 32.5d), or waste management (UNDESA 1992, § 20.7, § 20.24). In the Thai context, however, the concepts of sufficiency or sufficiency economy attain a much more central position than SD with regard to holistic and ‘people-centered’ development.

The brief exploration of articulations of SD within two national contexts or spaces aimed to problematise the capacity of logics of correspondence and logics of universalism to explain and account for differences between those articulations. In the appeal to the existence of a global SD as corresponding reference point, the conceptions of sufficiency and harmonious development according to the logic of correspondence would exclude explanatory means of accounting for the constitutive characteristics of these conceptions of SD, but would retain useful explanatory capacities within a narrow focus on the similarities between sufficiency economy and harmonious development as *species* of a global SD. The logic of imbrication obviates this need for conceptual convergence. Instead, besides applying a constitutive focus on similarities, the logic of imbrications allows for simultaneous difference to become a constitutive aspect of globally travelling policy concepts. In other words, the logic of imbrication allows us to conceive how the concept of SD, shared among spaces, becomes associated with sufficiency, and becomes a placeholder for, that is to say imbricates with, sufficiency economy. The logic of imbrication does not a priori assume which of the national or global space has the capacity to define the articulation of SD in the other.

Logic of displacement

The logic of displacement suggests that every move of deterritorialisation, including the introduction of policy concepts such as ESD or SD into a national context or a specific space, is inevitably repositioned with regard to the existent discursive formation of a particular signifying system, and that the policy concept thereby attains a hybrid character in relation to this signifying system. The authors illustrate below the specific form that this hybridity takes in the context of policy formation in Thailand and Vietnam.

The concept of sufficiency economy, which promotes SD in the Thai context, was developed under the patronage of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand and is strongly influenced by Buddhist philosophy (UNDP Thailand 2007). In Vietnam, on the other hand, SD is, as we have seen, closely associated with the concepts of economic growth, social progress and social equality. This partly reflects an established connection in both countries between economic development and sustainable development in SD policy. Certain conceptions of globalisation would see this focus on economic development as an indicator of the influence of global economic or capitalist forces. However, one needs to be careful before applying this to Vietnam, where policies also highlight ‘social progress’ and ‘social equality’, demands which are arguably more in line with a socialist discourse than a ‘global’ neoliberalist one. For example, one of the key principle for education in the *2001–2010 Education Development Strategic Plan* (EDSP) (MoET Vietnam 2001, 16) is: ‘To build up a popular, national, scientific, modern, socialist oriented education, based on Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh’s thoughts’. In a similar appeal to socialism, the *Vietnam Agenda 21* (GoV 2004) and the *5-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan (2006–2010)* (MoPI Vietnam 2006) share the ambition of implementing a socialist-oriented market economy. In this context, the concept of harmony re-emerges. The *Vietnam Agenda 21* (GoV 2004, 2) describes its role as to ‘sustainably develop the country on the basis of close, reasonable and harmonious coordination of economic and social development and environmental protection’. The current analysis illustrates that the same concept attains different meanings due to specific circumstances, that is to say its meaning is displaced as part of the concept’s movement from one space to be re-articulated in another.

The situatedness of the meaning of SD, that is the displacement of SD’s meaning in relation to specific discourses and language games, becomes even more accentuated when the comparison turns towards how *unsustainable* development is given meaning. The documented divergence in the articulations of unsustainable development can be seen to be accounted for by the logic of displacement, which does not see the movement from the global to the national to be determined a priori, in contrast to a logic of determination. For example, in the Thai context, sufficiency economy, as a guarantor for SD, is contrasted with western modes of thinking and presented as a counter-globalising movement based on distinct national development in the *10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan* (ONSEDB 2007, 18):

The ‘Sufficiency Economy’ philosophy, according to the group of thinkers who developed the theoretical framework of the philosophy, is a concept that goes beyond monist and dualist western ways of thinking. [...]

For Thailand to a place of honor and dignity in the world community and achieve ‘green and happiness society’ under globalization, it is necessary to revise the country’s ‘dynamic equilibrium’. Thailand, then, needs to reorient its paradigm and approach to

national development towards the middle path so as to balance socio-economic differences between rural and urban societies.

A closer look at causes of unsustainable development articulated in Thai policy (ONSEDB 2007, 11) shows how the topic is clearly linked with economic liberalism:

Unbalanced and unsustainable development was caused by strategic planning that adopted economic liberalism or capitalism which focused mainly on wealth and income flow into the country and used income per capita as a success indicator of development.

One can say that economic liberalism as associated with the global and Western world views is perceived as unsustainable, which gives SD a very space-specific meaning. A comparison of the Thai and Vietnamese articulations of sustainable and unsustainable development also shows that the logic of displacement allows for a paradoxical positioning of frontiers between sustainability and unsustainability, that is to say that the space-specificity of an imbricating concept of SD can lead to paradoxical meanings. For example, with regard to sustainable development in trade, the *Vietnamese Agenda* 21 (GoV 2004, 28) states:

To successfully implement sustainable development, it is essential to carry out the following activities:

[...]

Perfect the legal foundation, state management mechanisms about commerce and markets in order to develop markets and expand commercial relations

And with regard to sustainable development of regions and localities (ibid. 33), it says:

Areas and regions have to bring into full play their comparative advantages and create their own strengths in accordance with open economic structures which attach the domestic markets needs with those of foreign markets.

The comparison of the Thai articulation of *unsustainable* development and the Vietnamese articulation of *sustainable* development suggests a paradox between the ways they articulate the relationship between these types of development and economic liberalism. This paradox shows that the deterritorialising move of the introduction of a 'foreign' or 'global' SD in a particular space, according to our constitutive perspective on globalisation, cannot *determine* the reterritorialising move of SD in that space. Put differently, if 'foreign' SD equals economic liberalism, our Thai example leads to the conclusion that the re-articulation or appropriation of SD does not determine what it becomes, as SD is seen to be contrary to economic liberalism. Hence, it is impossible to see this movement from 'global' to national space as *determined*, that is to say as forms of reproduction and re-articulation of an original, since our two examples show that paradoxical articulations of SD are *possible* among national spaces.

However, from a theoretical perspective, the reterritorialising move, or the displacement, is not a move towards providing an elusive or obscure SD with a final, fully constituted being within a national space. Instead, as the exploration shows, SD remains ambiguous, that is to say undecidable. In the Vietnamese context, sustainable development is not solely equated with economic liberalism or an economist discourse, it is associated with more than just economic growth. The *Vietnam*

Agenda 21 (GoV 2004, 14) can be seen as articulating SD in the context of a socialist discourse:

The objective of the sustainable development in social terms is to obtain high results in the implementation of social progress and equality, ensure ever improved nutrition in diets and quality of health care for the people, ensure opportunities of education and employment for all people, reduce hunger and the poverty ratio and lessen economic disparity among different social classes and groups, reduce social evils, improve equality in rights and duties of members and generations in a society, maintain and develop the diversity and identity of natural culture, constantly upgrade the civilisation levels in the material and spiritual life.

The exploration of the logic of displacement is able to show how SD attains a *contingent* position as a result of its articulation against the background of the discursive formation of a given space. This contingency stands opposed to the logic of correspondence where the Being of SD is ultimately a priori determined by the global concept. However, following the logic of imbrication, SD in its displacement does not *become detached*, but retains a connection to its meanings and Beings in other spaces. In relation to the logic of displacements, our conception of the movement of SD to the national space of Vietnam suggests that the articulation of SD within these spaces does not determine or redetermine its meaning, but highlights that imbricating articulations of SD exist *within* and *among* spaces. Hence, rather than understanding the process of movement, that is to say territorialisation of SD within and among spaces, as complete or concluded, the displacement should be understood as ongoing, or, as the authors call it, *becoming*. This becoming is shaped by the existing discursive formations within a space, but is not fully determined by it, as there is a moment of contingency in its articulation, as well as an increase in valence as connections among spaces are established and remain. Thus, in contrast to the logic of correspondence, the moment of reduction to an absolute singular meaning never arises, since SD, according to the logic of imbrication, always retains a trace to a meaning within another space or another discourse. Certainly, within a logic of correspondence one can evaluate certain similarities as more important than others and thereby create a uniformity. When doing so the number of particular purposes inherent in discourse practices will be reduced to one. If one instead takes the different meanings and values connected to SD in the different discursive practices, that is to say articulations, in Vietnam or Thailand seriously one can say that the global is there in a form of imbrication, but not as singular correspondence, but rather as a plurality of displacements that take many different forms.

Logic of aporia

The logic of aporia highlights the impossibility of an absolute and final singularity of meaning or identity of signifiers such as SD, and the futility of any attempt to determine such a meaning. Thus, the logic deals with diversity and particularity, and the necessary failure of attempts at universalization. As we have seen in our analysis of Thai and Vietnamese policy-making, the aporia can be seen to exist with regard to the plurality or incommensurability of articulations of ESD and resulting tensions among demands that are associated with SD and ESD – for example, the demands of economic growth and social equality.

Tensions among group-specific demands may pose a problem to politics that need to bring different groups of social actors together, and to highlight equivalences

between those groups’ specific demands. Holistic policy concepts can usefully create such equivalences while remaining, as names of an ultimate state of fullness beyond unsustainability, an empty signifier (Laclau 1996). By way of example, we might recall how socialist-oriented market economy and sufficiency economy can be seen to address the tensions in the Thai and Vietnamese discursive formations and make policy without alienating any groups. The incommensurability underlying these tensions cannot be articulated but only be shown through paradoxes and aporias in policy-making. For example, in the case of Vietnamese policy, this antagonism is apparent in an articulation of progress, which is on the one hand, equated with social equality, and on the other hand, with economic growth. The examples from Vietnamese policy-making suggest that the call for social equality can be associated with a socialist discourse, while economic growth can be associated with an economist discourse. Similarly, in the Thai context, sufficiency economy can be seen to face other antagonistic positions within the field of policy-making and within the national context or a space at large, but it has to remain empty in order not to become associated with a particular demand. If it does, the concept of sufficiency economy would lose its ability to denote equivalence among diverse demands, and hence become more likely to allow for the articulation of antagonisms among these demands. Due to such a function in politics, SD does have to remain obscure or ambiguous, only vaguely articulating something that has to be opposed: unsustainable development.

It is here in this need for the articulation of a shared enemy that we are dealing with an aporia, in that particularity and the universal reject each other and yet at the same time require each other. Laclau (2000, 56) formulates it in the following fashion: ‘[w]hat is inherent in the hegemonic relation, if the universal and the particular reject each other but require each other, is the representation of an impossibility’. It is here that SD can name a universal, as a place beyond particularity, but cannot represent it, since it relies on the articulation of a particular that is to be overcome.³ The articulation of this vague enemy, however, can threaten the name of that universal with a possible collapse into a particularity, as our exploration of the position of liberal economics in Vietnamese and Thai policy-making shows.

The empty signifier adds key signifiers associated with a number of particular discursive positions into a chain of equivalences, as it was the case with the themes that ESD has been associated with in the DESD framework (UNESCO 2005, 2006) or the Vietnamese national action plan (VNCDESD 2010). An empty signifier can therefore be seen to be a premise for hegemonic articulations that try to elevate particular demands, yet maintain the equivalences created under the empty signifier, to which all kind of particulars are ascribed to represent the universal (Laclau 2000, 57).

Yet, while our earlier analyses have dealt with aporias *within* a space, the exploration and theoretical constitution of the movement among spaces reveals a second aporia. This second aporia can be analytically approached if we compare the

Sufficiency-as-Sustainable Development		Vietnam (Socialist-oriented Economy)
	DIFFERENCE	
Harmony-as-Sustainable Development		Thailand (Sufficiency Economy)
Sustainable Development-as-X	SIMILARITY	UNDESD Framework (‘global’)

particular metaphors associated with an internationally travelling empty signifier (SD) *among* different national scales.

The table above is to highlight the aporetic aspect of the articulation of sustainable development that emerges once we compare the meanings of the concept in Vietnam, Thailand and the UNDESD Framework. The aporetic aspect emerges as SD is to signify both, *different* notions of progress (Sufficiency and Harmony) as well as to signify that which is *shared* among these different notions of progress. To put it differently, the second aporia exists in the difference/similarity logic that is relied upon when ESD is articulated as a globally inclusive and uniform policy concept. This inclusive and uniform notion of ESD beyond a space and the aporia it entails, which cannot be articulated in standard rules of logic, can be observed within the *Framework for the UNDESD International Implementation Scheme* (FIIS) (UNESCO 2006, 24).

[DESD] objectives may be *articulated* at each level, from community to the global *context*, but at each level the Decade should offer *a framework* for enhanced action and a link to other *contexts* and other levels.

The permission to articulate DESD objectives at various levels logically entails variation (difference), since a total consistency between articulations at various levels would render those articulations redundant. However, the variation is limited by the framework of the articulation as the quote above highlights in its appeal to presenting a framework for action and for linking contexts. The question that arises is what relationship the articulations have to each other or how context relates to context? The UNDESD framework (FIIS) (UNESCO 2006, 24f) clarifies this as:

The Decade provides an opportunity for developing countries to *define for themselves* the kind of path they wish to follow. From the perspective of sustainable development it is clear that models derived from the industrialised countries are neither appropriate nor desirable, given the pressing need for those countries themselves to adopt more sustainable lifestyles. Building on strong commitment to values of community and solidarity, the developing countries have a chance to develop – and to model – viable, alternative approaches to sustainable development.

The above passage clearly shows how sustainable development, in its singular form, becomes a signifier for differing and alternative approaches that share a common reference to sustainable development. In this articulation, SD is used *as a collective and inclusive name* as part of an abstract movement beyond context, where, however, the differential Beings of ESD as they relate to the national contexts are acknowledged. Yet at the same time, in the DESD framework (FIIS) (UNESCO 2006, 27), these different visions of SD are miraculously seen to fit into a development of *vision* for ESD, highlighting uniformity among difference in the plurality of visions:

Progress towards sustainable development requires that the growing global awareness of social, environmental, cultural and economic issues is transformed into understanding of *root causes*; it also means that local, national and global *visions* of *what it means* to live and work sustainably are developed. Building *vision* enables *ESD* to take root in local *realities* and to build at the same time a global commitment and *unity across diverse contexts*. Future ESD vision building is related to the vision building that has gone on in developing local Agenda 21s in many countries.

While the prior example hints at an articulation of SD as a collective name for differences among spaces or contexts, these multiple processes (building vision in

general) are paradoxically assumed to lead to a necessary unity across diverse contexts, the articulation of ESD in the second example requires the neglect of a logical inconsistency in order to *name a necessary process of conversion*.

The exploration of the logic of aporia aimed to conceptualise the logical paradoxes that are characteristic of the conception of ESD and SD as points of convergence, as places of uniformity, confronting apparent dissensus. While a logic of correspondence and associated logic of universality could conceive this paradox as a problem that could be solved through synthesis, as a movement towards greater or more accurate knowledge, the logic of aporia highlights that this universalism is out of reach and the field of knowledge will be characterised by dissensus and politics. It is in this context of an aporetic articulation that ESD and SD can appeal to policy-makers, since they allow for adumbrating an attainable global universality beyond particularities and potential antagonisms, as they emerge *among* and *within* context-dependent articulations. In these aporetic articulations of ESD that point towards a place beyond context and particularity, ESD becomes a central placeholder of an absent presence still to come, of still-absent unity *within* and *among* spaces. It is in this double aporetic form that SD and ESD allow for the hegemonic articulation of similarity among the different, *within* and *among* the discursive formations that present the horizons against which various national policies are written. These hegemonic articulations will aim to elevate particular demands and means as privileged and potent to achieving SD and ESD, yet, since they aim to realise an empty signifier as denoting a universalism, these group-specific attempts are always in danger as being contested.

Discussion

The authors' ambition in this article has been to empirically explore the movement of the policy concept of ESD and SD *between* spaces through comparing policy-making for SD in various contexts. Thus, the authors have attempted to give meaning to similarities and differences in the articulation of SD within different spaces. As such the article aims to exemplify on how the for us constitutive logics of globalisation allow us to conceive of these movements among spaces based on concrete cases of discursive practices that aim to give meaning to SD and ESD.

The exploration of alternative logics of globalisation conducted by us does not claim to have exhausted globalisation and the particular configurations of SD and ESD. The authors neither wished nor attempted to dismiss the warnings of colleagues within the field of environmental education research on the relationship between neoliberalism and globalisation (Hursh and Henderson 2011; Le Grange 2009; Lotz-Sisitka 2010; Payne 2010; Stevenson 2007) and ESDs globalising potential of ESD (Jickling and Wals 2008; Sumner 2008). Instead, the aim was to explore the explanatory limits of certain logics of globalisation, which would elevate these warnings to a universal status. The exploration in the contexts of Vietnamese and Thai policy-making did not exhaust the possible configurations of the movement of SD and ESD among various spaces, but problematised certain theoretical constitutions of this movement.

The alternative set of logics of globalisation also specifically addresses the notion of determination (logic of determination) and especially the appeal to power. Here, the logics of imbrication and displacement limit the power of the global movement, at a theoretical level. We might ask ourselves, if globalisation is a universal

phenomenon of international change, what role do warnings about the globalising tendency or power of ESD have? If it is a truly universal process, what influence can a particular resistance have? The appeal to a logic of displacement in our conception of globalisation is aimed to mitigate, or rather replace, this power of the global movement, by highlighting how the movement and meaning of ESD as a concept among spaces and the potential homogenising tendencies depend on contingent practice, that is to say the realignment of ESD within the context of the national context or a specific space. It is in this way that the focus of the presented alternative conception of globalisation moves away from its focus on what the objective position (logic of correspondence) and the resulting Being of ESD is with regard to a universal space. Instead, the article aims to highlight the divergences and different trajectories that the articulation of ESD within different spaces produces. The question of what ESD ultimately is, is not so much of interest as what ESD can become in particular. Based on the underlying logic of contingency, this process of becoming will, from a theoretical perspective, remain for us non-predictable and emerge in practice against the socio-cultural contexts that diverse sub-spaces of the global represent. The logic of displacement does not rule out that the articulation of ESD might not prioritise economical aspects of development (Jickling 2005; Sauvé, Brunelle and Berryman 2005; Sumner 2008), but the articulation is not conceived to be determined by a deeper, global or transcendental Being of ESD or SD (logic of determination).

The authors want to point out a central problem with the logics of determination and logic of correspondence, namely that these logics eliminate any theoretical space for politics. The logic of determination and the logic of correspondence do away with any true chance for resistance, intervention or to govern a national or subnational context or space, since these logics subdue these spaces a priori to the remote influence of the global or international. The authors hold it to be of importance to evaluate the conceptual logics used to explain social change and social regulation – including globalisation – with regard to space for interference or ability to influence of nation states and local actors in relation to the global. It is here put forward that a reliance on appeals to the power of globalisation can become problematic for attempts to provide conceptual frameworks for resistance against certain patterns of social formation and change. If we conceive of the global in terms of power where for example institutions or particular groups are able to impose their will, to dominate and to possess the ability to a priori produce certain effects, we argue that it will be difficult to conceive of the ability to influence and resist and the global will become an omnipotent self-unfolding process. What the exploration is interpreted to highlight is the possibility to challenge power, that is to say the abandonment of an appeal to a logic of determination in our exploration opened up an analytical sensitivity for the political that we see to be at work in paradox articulations of ESD within different national spaces. To specify, the empirical engagement portrayed the paradoxical ways in which ESD and SD are articulated in different spaces. While we according to a logic of correspondence might argue that these paradoxes indicate the complexities of the phenomenon of globalisation, the authors would like make an argument for an alternate interpretation of the ontological condition that these paradoxes can be seen to give account for. Instead of seeing them as irrationalities or misinterpretations of an objective or original ideological position of ESD or SD within the global field of forces dominated by the economy, we see these paradoxes to highlight the impossibility of certain ideological positions to determine what education and sustainability is supposed to be. The portrayed paradoxes are by us

interpreted to underline the blind spots of critical social theory that feeds upon the logics of determination and correspondence, as these paradoxes trouble understandings of globalisation that see it to lead to a seemingly shrinking world moulded around neoliberal economic principles. They are troublesome as they can only be explained in terms of irrationalities or historical peculiarities, that will over time be eradicated due the a priori ascribed power of an elite to produce global effects. For us, the in the paper portrayed paradoxes highlight the conditions that require the appeal to concepts such as SD and ESD, where the impossibility to impose a certain will and interpretation of the world forces different political actors to investigate in concepts that are supposed to denote that what is universally shared, yet, where there is no underlying common referent that provides a positive meaning that is fully inclusive and that all political actors can ascribe to.

For us, these paradoxes highlight a space of resistance, an opportunity to change the frontiers of the war of position and to denote neoliberal ideological demands as that which is equivalent to unsustainability.

Notes

1. Logics are not used to refer to the logical foundation of a language, but rather to the types of relationships between entities of a particular language, as a form of life, where these types render possible the operation of a language as a system. Logics thereby deal with the properties of entities within language games as part of a language as a system of rules (Laclau 2000, 284).
2. Being is here understood as discursively constituted, that is to say the temporary result of discursive practice. Its being is, by extension, interpreted to be relative to specific formations in the discursive, that is to say in relation to context.
3. Representation in the form of articulation requires that certain relational differences be articulated to give meaning to a signifier. In the case that a signifier is articulated without any differentiation it loses all meaning. Even empty signifiers bear the mark of such a need for differentiation. Sustainable development, for example, needs to distance itself from something, e.g. unsustainable development.

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