Postcolonial studies exhibited – from its emergence in the 1980s within the field of literature and cultural studies – a controversial relationship towards Marxism. Scholars like Benita Parry and Arif Dirlik objected that its analyses were mostly examining cultural or discursive matters instead of political economy (Dirlik 1994; Parry 2004). Moreover the term 'postcolonial' was considered as a depoliticizing word for academics who shied away from the expression ‘neocolonialism’ or ‘imperialism’ (McCintosh 1992). Whereas in the USA there have been debates about convergences between Marxism and postcolonial theory (Bartolovich/Lazarus 2002), the German discussions on that subject somewhat lagged behind until a couple of years ago. With the increasing reception of postcolonial feminist scholar Gayatri Spivak's work in the English-and now also in the German-speaking world a new tendency becomes visible: postcolonial studies, especially the feminist reading of it, can be extremely useful in developing a contemporary materialist critique of capitalism. Because it is postcolonial feminism that examines the transformations of a transnational world market intertwined with the legacies of former colonial/imperial structures and the re-arrangement of gender relations.

My article is based on the assumption that postcolonial feminism, as a highly self-reflexive approach with a particular focus on the intersections of different axes of social inequality, oppression and discrimination, has been intellectually at the forefront of bringing together critiques of sexism and racism with questions of the international division of labour between the global South and North. Thus in the following considerations I will take up postcolonial feminism as a fruitful and thought-provoking framework in order to analyze and interrogate the current functioning of globalization as finance-driven capitalism. In contrast to a variety of investigations on international political economy I consider it necessary to include gender, ethnicity/race, and transnational relations. A postcolonial feminism that takes the subjectivities, life conditions and political fights of marginalized women in the Third World as a starting point allows a completely different perspective on globalization: such an analytical view turns the hegemonic story of neoliberalism upside down and reveals that the livelihood of the female poor have not been improved in the last decades. Rather, poverty has deepened in the most disadvantaged sections of the population in Asia, Latin America and Africa, the majority of them being women with low income. The second new way for criticizing the present economy is the discourse on degrowth. Degrowth is a relatively new theoretical and practical concept for alternative ways of producing, working, consuming and living. By demonstrating how much the current economic system destroys ecology and social relations it tries to advocate sustainable, democratic and socially just societies. Degrowth as social movement
and theory combines ecological, anti-consumerist, and anti-capitalist elements. Yet, as a mixture of quite diverse and sometimes contradictory influences it is necessary to examine if its insights can be helpful for a feminist critique of finance capital and oppressive gender relations. Thus in my paper I will analyze if – from the point of view of postcolonial feminism – the new discussions about post-growth can be meaningful and adjuvant for a feminist materialist critique of anthropocentric capitalism. My article is structured in three parts: (1) I describe the crucial features of my concept of postcolonial feminism, which includes a critique of patriarchal gender relations, economic structures and eurocentrism. (2) Secondly, I will present central feminist perspectives on degrowth and explain how they can be used for postcolonial feminism. (3) Finally, I try to bring the key aspects from feminist interventions on degrowth together with the main insights of postcolonial feminism and try to reconcile both strands – while at the same time emphasizing the differences.

My paper will start by describing the crucial features of a postcolonial feminism that aims at analyzing and changing the structural inequalities, and injustices not only along gender but also other axes of hierarchy and power, especially the legacies of colonialism and imperialism (including the not so new international division of labour).

What is postcolonial feminism and why is it important for materialist critiques of capitalism? Postcolonial feminism emerged from the struggles and theoretical contributions of Third World women as well as black and migrant women in the last 30 years. They in particular questioned the universalism of Women’s Studies claiming that they speak for all women when instead they took the experience of white middle-class women in the West as implicit foundation. It was also criticized that in research on imperialism, racism, national liberation/nationalism and migration gender relations were often neglected or invisible. Postcolonial feminism – even if it was not labeled with that term – thus challenged at the same time the eurocentrism of feminism and the androcentrism and sexism of postcolonial studies (Gandhi 1998). Therefore postcolonial feminism opened up a new field of analysis with a new perspective and connected the hitherto separate spheres of feminist and postcolonial research in a way that changed content and form of both. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and You-me Park make this very clear in their definition: “Postcolonial feminism cannot be regarded simply as a subset of postcolonial studies, or, alternatively, as another variety of feminism. Rather it is an intervention that is changing the configurations of both postcolonial and feminist studies. Postcolonial feminism is an exploration of and at the intersections of colonialism and neocolonialism with gender, nation, class, race, and sexualities in the different contexts of women’s lives, their subjectivities, work, sexuality, and rights” (Rajan/Park 2000: 53).

Looking back it can now be stated that postcolonial feminism owes a lot to internal critiques of the overlooking – sometimes even ignorance – of racism, new forms of colonialism, migration within Women’s and Gender Studies. Concerning the broader intellectual context, Leela Gandhi has stressed that postcolonial feminism was also influenced by discussions on Said’s Orientalism, the poststructuralist questioning of the notion of Subject, Truth, Progress, and Revolution, Marxist anti-capitalism and older theories of imperialism (Gandhi 1998). Furthermore, the critique of (under-)development as a relationship of systematic dependence between the center and periphery was crucial, with the first keeping the latter in an underdeveloped state in order to secure its own development (Senghaas 1974). All these theoretical references vary of course from one scholar to the other.

Before I come to the arguments of postcolonial feminist thinker Gayatri Spivak, the work I find most useful for analyzing the current phase of capitalism, I want to give a
brief overview about three types of feminism that are subsumed under the term postcolonial feminism although they have slightly different epistemological and political starting points. In order to clarify the crucial elements for my understanding of postcolonial feminism I will rely on the classification of Rajan and Park, which defines three varieties of postcolonial feminism:

a) The first one is called transnational feminism and can be described as dialectical and oriented towards practice. Its main thematic fields are the international division of labour, sexuality/sex work and homework.

b) The second type of feminism that starts from the analysis of social inequality and aims at changes in practical politics is described as anti-racist feminism. It investigates the relations between gender, migration, and immigration.

c) The third strand is a postcolonial feminism that takes the so called ‘Third World’ as starting point. Here the main areas of investigation are: the history of colonialism and imperialism, religious fundamentalism and cultural nationalism, the idea of development, and negotiations with ideologies like nationalism, (neo-)liberalism etc. (Rajan/Park 2000). Certainly the above mentioned typology contains ideal types that point out the main thematic fields and goals; in reality we find indeed a mixture of research interests and political inclinations in different postcolonial feminist works (e.g. Chandra Mohanty, Uma Narayan, Sara Suleri, Audre Lourde). My following arguments concentrate on the third type, a postcolonial feminism that starts from the living conditions of Third World women. By introducing the basic theoretical lines of Gayatri Spivak’s work I will argue that it is the most elaborate approach for understanding the intersections between neoliberal globalization and sexism in a worldwide context. First of all I want to emphasize that Spivak is predominantly known for her work on representation in the article 'Can the subaltern speak?' (Spivak 1988). Although I think the question if and how we could speak for others is extremely crucial in the international sphere I want to emphasize that from the beginning of her writings, Spivak has also focused on economic questions with a strong Marxist background. Already in her book Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present she has depicted the contemporary globalization as coded by financial capital and world trade (Spivak 1999). In her recent work, the question of financialization has become more important (Spivak 2000a, b; 2002). What does financialization mean? Financialization implies that everything, be it goods or intangible entities, can become a tradeable object for the financial market. Against the logic of Fordism where financial capital was mostly used for investments in the real economy nowadays financial markets must be seen as the dominant economic form aiming at short term shareholder-value and externalizing social, political, and ecological costs (also Huffschmid 2002; Schulmeister 2009).

Spivak has repeatedly demonstrated what the mechanisms of financial capital mean for poor women in the Global South: If we talk for example about biodiversity we can witness big transnational companies appropriating the knowledge of indigenous or rural communities in India or Brazil without paying for it. Drawing on new biotechnologies the World Trade Organization (WTO) has in 1995 enacted the 'International Agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights' (TRIPS) which regulates the use of, access to and rights over seeds of plants such as rice. At first sight one might ask where the connections between natural resources and the legal framework of patents and intellectual property are. In order to understand the internal correlation it is important to know that in India rice has been sowed by local farmers with their century old knowledge about biological diversity. It is predominantly women who are key food producers and play a central role in the conservation and enhancement of genetic resources (Shiva/Dankelman 1992). Through the 'green revolution' in the late 1960s high
yielding varieties of crops (mainly rice and wheat) were introduced by The Rice Research Institute (IRRI) funded by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundation to the Punjab promising a higher productivity. With big multinational cooperations entering the market of India’s rice bowl farmers were not only convinced to buy genetically modified seeds but also had to buy fertilizer, pesticides and new seeds every year again. This development resulted in a dependency of small-scale peasants on commercialized agro-business. TRIPS expands these exploitative relations by transforming them into an internationally binding treaty which privileges the profit interests of transnational companies over subsistence rights or food security. In one of its most important sections on 'Patentable subject matter', article 27, 1 of TRIPS stipulates as one criteria for processes and products that can be claimed as patentable matter; inventions 'that are capable of industrial application' (TRIPS §27, 1). Whereas this passage might sound like a mere technicality, it disadvantages indigenous women structurally by not acknowledging their knowledge of and their responsibilities for biodiversity. Because only big companies are able to proceed natural resources for industrial tasks – in contrast to rural communities who use their rice seeds for their livelihood. Thus the logic, scope and application of TRIPS shows that international laws have been established that punish in particular poor rural women for not having set up property rights for their biological resources and expertise (see also Sahai 2004). Another illustration of the consequences of financialization from a postcolonial feminist point of view is the production of cash crops for bio-fuels. In India the national action plan on climate change suggests to include indigenous and farmers’ communities in dealing with this global threat (Government of India 2008). But when we look closer at the projects where cash crops are grown for multinational companies, we learn that the targeted groups – in large parts rural women – were either displaced from their land or had to plant bio-
diesel crop on soil that they needed for subsistence farming (Ramdas 2009). This trend has dramatic effects for the poor communities because they are losing their access to land and the right to grow their own food in accordance with food sovereignty (Wasser/Backhouse/Dietz 2012). Thus we can state that a postcolonial feminist view on current transformations of capitalism helps us to see the 'dark side' of globalization: it is the rural as a complex multilayered space of the global where mainly the labor power of poor women in the global South is exploited for profit. With her focus on subaltern women Spivak's approach opens our framework for the necessary and constitutive role of indigenous and peasant women living below the poverty line in the dominant models of development and economic growth. Besides paying attention to the present international division of labour another important focal point for postcolonial feminism is a strong critique of development. Because for the global South the idea of development is not dead – it is indeed as strong a discourse as is growth. In a country like India the framework for politics and economy is built upon the following two terms: national development and inclusive growth. This pair is invoked in almost every publication of the government but also functions as an unquestioned good in the public sphere (newspapers, TV-shows etc.). Especially relevant for postcolonial feminism is the integration of poor women from the global South into the discourse of development. Since the big UN conferences, the last one was the Conference on Women in 1995 in Beijing, women in developing countries have been included in the international order. Problematic in that context is that poor women from the global South are not seen as subjects or agents but as affected persons from the actions of Others. The Beijing Platform spells out their 'vulnerability' in detail (Spivak 1996). As a consequence, for postcolonial feminists the critique of developmental politics needs to be continued. Because still the ideas, scope, and
implementation measures of the majority of the developmental policy programs (usually conceptualized and funded by northern states) do not take into consideration gendered divisions of labour, gendered property rights, gendered access to resources and thus deepen the injustice between women and men below the poverty line.

So let me summarize: What is crucial for postcolonial feminism is the change of the macro-economic and political structure with the rise of neoliberalism. Free trade and the expansion of financial markets are two main aspects of the dominant neoliberal economic order. And it is in particular in Third World countries where processes of liberalization, deregulation and privatization are implemented with the aim of ‘development’. Thus from a postcolonial feminist account globalization – a container word with not much analytical precision – could be better described as free trade in connection with the financialization of the world framed by assimilating poor women in Africa, Latin America and Asia. When seeking a critical standpoint in relation to these tendencies it is important to understand that the power relations within (unequal) trade have been criticized since the 1970s with the emergence of dependence theory (Senghaas 1974), but the meaning of financial institutions with their short term interest on shareholder value have not yet gained the same attention. Thus with Spivak’s version of postcolonial feminism it is possible to relate the new international division of labour to the industrialization of developing countries - that meant integrating women in the Global South into the global labour force - with newly developed electronic financial instruments on biodiversity, climate change, food, and health (Löw 2009, 2014).

Now I am coming to the idea of degrowth. Degrowth is an interesting theoretical and activist concept. Understood very broadly, it starts with criticizing the hegemonic idea of growth and tries to develop other forms of working and living together. However, from my point of view post-growth does not really have a comprehensive theory about the structural functioning of capitalism, sexism and post- or neocolonialism. Thus the arguments for a critique of growth, which is an abbreviation for the production of value in Marxist terms, cannot really explain the social structures of a capitalist patriarchal and neocolonial world society. Nevertheless, I think that due to the mainstream neoliberal discourse in the West and also in dominant parts of society in the global South post-growth can be used as a strategic intervention in current debates about the economy and the economic crises.

For my paper I have chosen the sole approach that so far connects post-growth with a feminist perspective: It is an interview with Barbara Muraca and Tanja Egan-Krieger done by Andrea Vetter entitled A good life beyond growth - layouts and critical interventions by feminist economics (Muraca/Egan-Krieger 2013). Let me just briefly mention that in the majority of debates about post-growth feminism is largely absent. Neither the basic anthology in German, Postwachstumsgesellschaft: Konzepte für die Zukunft (2010) by Seidl/Zahrnt, nor Latouche’s Minuswachstum (2004) or Georgescu-Roegen’s The entropy law and the economic process (1974) mention gender, gender relations, women or feminism. Thus I consider it a first step into the right direction that the exchange between Muraca, Egan-Krieger and the interviewer discusses feminist points of views on degrowth explicitly, in detail, and in a differentiated way (Muraca/Egan-Krieger 2013). I was even more intrigued when I noticed that the two researchers take up the relationship between the global South and North as another crucial topic for degrowth. Because we have seen in the introduction that the asymmetries between developed and so called ‘underdeveloped’ countries in the socio-economic, political, and cultural realm in relation to gender are crucial for postcolonial feminist scholars investigating the history of colonialism and imperialism until the present. Explaining the relevant feminist thoughts on degrowth Muraca and Egan-Krieger refer to four basic thematic fields, (1) the relationship...
between growth and emancipation, (2) the notion of a good life through solidarity instead of abandonment, (3) degrowth as ally for struggles in the global South and (4) the redistribution of family related and formal work. My following thoughts will ponder on the topic of work because the gendering of labour is a crucial field for a materialist feminist critique of social relations. Marxist and socialist feminists have demonstrated that the situation of women within patriarchal capitalist economies must be conceptualized from their unpaid work in the privatized household including cooking, cleaning, rearing children, and caring for the elderly (Haug 2009). In their examination on the fourth item, work, Muraca and Egan-Krieger question the concept of work itself, the (usually gender-specific unequal) distribution between men and women and also what counts as valuable or worthy labour. In accordance with many feminist approaches they claim that so called reproductive work should be recognized as labour in the same way as so called productive or paid work (paradigmatic in the German context Winker 2011). They also propose that in an ideal degrowth society the division between paid work and non-paid work will be sublated. Together with this Muraca argues for a disentangling between paid work and income. She also brings in an epistemological question, namely the pattern of thinking: as long as we economize, for instance, care activities for child-rearing through the market it will strengthen our grappling towards growth. In other words: only if we move on beyond conventional ideas of organizing the economy we will be able to develop new models. Muraca also admits that there might be work that one doesn’t like to do but that has to be done. The general question here would be: how is labour distributed in a fair way? And what are the criteria for fairness defined by whom and who benefits/loses from them? From Muraca’s point of view the duties of child-rearing could also be organized more collectively. Like in kibbutzim the parents don’t have to be the only ones that are responsible but could share their work with others. Some of these ideas are utopian so far but it is important that they are part of the current debates about other ways of working and living.

From a postcolonial feminist point of view it seems necessary to supplement the feminist discussions on degrowth in three ways: first of all the idea of a degrowth society has not been discussed much in postcolonial feminist approaches yet. But quite recently a couple of feminist scholars from the global South have suggested models for another way of a good life. I will analyze very briefly the idea of buen vivir, a social utopia which has materialized in the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia - and can be described as similar to the concept of degrowth. However, in contrast to degrowth buen vivir has already been implemented as a basic principle in the Ecuadorian Constitution of 2008 that guarantees rights and duties for different groups in the nation-state: Under Title 2 Chapter 2 the following ‘Rights of the good way of living (buen vivir)’ are listed: water and food, healthy environment; information and communication; culture and science; education; habitat and housing; health and labor and social security (Republic of Ecuador: Constitution 2008). As Muraca’s elaborations have shown the division between market economy and care economy along labour are crucial from a gender-specific perspective. Because it is usually interwoven with power asymmetries between women and men. Following Anna-Lisa Gann (2013) in her analysis, buen vivir can be understood as a progressive concept for an alternative social order including feminist critiques at its core. The two crucial elements for a radical transformation are on the one hand the widening of the notion of labour and on the other hand the conception of nature as a sovereign subject of law in itself (in contrast to conventional ideas about nature as legal object). Coming to the first point, it can be seen that the Ecuadorian model of buen vivir aims at a concept of work that is in accordance with human needs for care and demands to services, infrastructure, and...
working hours. Moreover the state fosters the common responsibility and reciprocity concerning domestic work and familial duties (Republic of Ecuador: Constitution 2008 § 333). This passage reveals the attentiveness toward the social unjust distribution of these activities between women and men and emphasizes that gender justice is a constitutive element of a just society.

From a postcolonial feminist perspective the topic of care work is important as well. However, it needs to be said that an overwhelming body of anti-racist feminist research has been done on the increasing intersections between gendering and ethnicizing processes when it comes to reproductive work in Europe and the USA (Lutz/Palenga-Möllenbeck 2013). It is mainly undocumented female migrants who take care of elderly people, children and do the cleaning and cooking. Referring to the general situation in the global South there are not many studies about for example the situation of the new middle class families in Indian cities and their distribution of care work. My guess would be that the formation of an urban middle class in India will lead to somehow different and similar developments compared to the West at the same time: deepening dominant Hindu gender structures by re-traditionalizing relations between upper caste women and men interwoven with inequalities along caste, education, religion, and class/income. This could result in middle class women with a good education becoming housewives and men the sole breadwinner. This model would be supplemented by households who rely on processes of gendering and ethnicizing as well. For example if a women of a lower caste or class is hired to do the reproductive labour in exchange for payment. Especially for the latter arrangement there can be found some empirical trends in the current discussions about women's labour migration in India (Mazumdar 2013). Postcolonial feminism has until now not paid much attention to intra-familial divisions of labour and power relations. The majority of approaches has focused on productive or paid work in the maquiladoras, special economic zones and so called 'homework' for the world market.

The second point that is vital for postcolonial feminism is the relation between the Global South and North when it comes to production, representation, and power asymmetries. Egan-Krieger explains that the pathway of degrowth which industrialized countries have gone is a path that cannot be generalized. The expansion of the West has taken place with developing countries, the former colonies, paying the price. And there are also ecological boundaries, which forbid that the same model can be realized worldwide. Scholars even talk about a duty to find other pathways. Controversial is however, if countries in the Global North have to shrink in order to enable the growth of the Global South until a certain threshold which is a condition for a certain quality of life. Moreover Muraca mentions the debates about post-development: these works stress that the expansion of the capitalist world-market under the hegemony of western countries has established a dependence on the center and turned developing countries into providers for raw materials. And even if we talk about connections between the increase of India's GDP and the improvement of life conditions for women Muraca points out that economic growth does not automatically correlate with feminist emancipation. There are certain political conditions required that make it possible for women to articulate their demands and find allies for their political goals. Muraca also highlights that the crucial question is: how will the surplus be distributed? What is done with growth and where do the investments go? Particularly the last questions resonate with Spivak's notion of socialism.

And this is the third important point for a postcolonial feminist critique of capitalism. What kind of models or visions for another society are articulated within the degrowth movement? Which role do relations of property, production and consumption play? How are the connections between political
economy, politics, ideology and the law conceptualized? Far from answering these 'big' questions Spivak, due to her deconstructivist affiliation, proposes a quite unusual notion of socialism. In her article *Supplementing Marxism* she argues that socialism does not contain another way of production with less financial capital. Instead Spivak pleads for another version of socialism which takes up the issue of social justice and redistribution of wealth from top to the bottom layers as its most important task (Spivak 1993). And socialism should not be thought of as an institutionally fixed order but rather a constant "pushing away – a differing and a deferral – of the capital-ist harnessing of the social productivity" (Spivak 1993: 119, Footnote 7). This idea has three relevant aspects: first of all, an ongoing struggle of oppositional forces is necessary to establish a socialist hegemony. And there is no doubt that the current hegemony is dominated by neoliberal ideas. Secondly, it has to be understood that - because transnational capital uses patriarchal gender relations in Special Economic Zones and labour intensive factories for textiles, computer chips and other export oriented products in Africa, Asia and South America - poor women in the ‘Third World’ are the main agents of wealth production at present. And thirdly, it is them who are currently fighting against the dominant actors of globalization on a local level (for food sovereignty, the recognition of their 'traditional' knowledge, alternative developments, and democratic participation) and thus 'we' in the West can learn from them.

Bringing these findings from postcolonial feminism and feminist interventions into degrowth together I would suggest that postcolonial feminism can gain from current debates about degrowth and economic feminist critiques in the West. Because the latter helps to complement the mainly structural investigations on a more micro-political or subjective level. On the other hand, feminist contributions on degrowth could learn from the systemic Marxist knowledge about the division of labour between genders, nations and the one third and two-third world. Spivak's concept of financialization also helps to better understand the recent dynamics of capital and its constant need for the primary valorization (In-Wertsetzung) of sectors that are allegedly outside the 'normal' production of value and surplus. Thus I think the new controversies about degrowth as a movement and political ideas have activated and intensified feminist materialist critiques of capitalism. It has to be seen in the near future if feminist positions within degrowth and postcolonial feminists can work together for a broader coalition, share some actions on certain topics or just stick to a friendly and well-meaning relationship.

**Literature:**


