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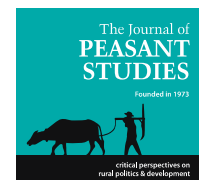
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The German Press Discourse on the (New) Green Revolution in Sub-Saharan Africa

Anika Mahla

International Institute of Social Studies (ISS)
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The German Press Discourse on the (New) Green Revolution in Sub-Saharan Africa

Anika Mahla

Abstract

The study reconstructs the latest discourse on the (New) Green Revolution within the German press by using the approach of an argumentative and narrative discourse analysis. In 2006, shortly before the latest food crisis (2008), the “Alliance for a Green Revolution” (AGRA) was initiated by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and the Rockefeller Foundation. AGRA aims at eradicating poverty and hunger by adopting a “market-led technology” approach (Toenniessen et al. 2008).

The aim is to elaborate which stories (narratives) and actors with similar positions (discourse coalitions) exist regarding the (New) Green Revolution in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). To answer this question, there are two major positions: on the one hand an affirmative coalition of actors in favor of the industrialization of agriculture and on the other hand a critical discourse coalition which prefers agroecological alternatives. The affirmative story emphasizes the importance of productivity, growth, technologies, chemical inputs, competitive markets and value chains in order to generate food security. The critical coalition prefers the concept of food sovereignty instead in order to claim the importance of access to land and other resources (e.g. seed) as well as the empowerment of farmers. From their perspective a democratization of food systems goes in line with participation. Further crucial pillars for a multifunctional agriculture are the focus on local production of smallholder and environmental sustainability. The similarities and differences between these coalitions are outlined on the basis of the underlying actant structures. As a result, it is stressed that hegemonic characteristics of the affirmative story are predominant in the discourse, which increases the demand for further industrialization of the food system, especially in SSA.

“Control oil and you control nations; control food and you control the people.”

Henry Kissinger

The History of Green Revolution

The term “Green Revolution” was coined by William Gaud who worked for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The term is associated with “agricultural development strategies based primarily on new technologies and the expansion of industrial agriculture” (Martens and Seitz 2015). The underlying goal was to introduce new farming practices in order to increase yield in Asia. On behalf of the Rockefeller Foundation, Norman Borlaug conducted research on how to increase agricultural productivity in Mexico in the early 1940s. Subsequently, a blue print for modernization and industrialization of agriculture was born. The success of the Green Revolution is based on the use of fertilizer, artificial irrigation, monocultures, newly bred club wheat and machinery. Furthermore, in Asian countries (especially India) the Green Revolution led to increased yield for wheat, rice and corn. India became a successful case as the country managed to export food products despite its large population. In line with the above mentioned technological interventions the role of the state changed due to its growing engagement in consultations, subsidies and price guarantees. Another pillar that fostered the Green Revolution was the establishment of several regional centers on agricultural research. In this regard the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) as the first global public-private partnership (PPP) was founded in 1971 (Patel et al. 2009; Sprenger 2012; Hoering 2007a; Martens and Seitz 2015). In general, systems of knowledge and technology were imported and planning processes followed a top-down approach. Locally adapted interventions regardless of specific needs were promoted. Thereby the complexity and diversity of farming systems as well as their environments were widely ignored. This modernization led to several unintended negative effects on the ecological and social domain:

Environmental consequences

Soil depletion and degradation

Loss of biodiversity

Irrigation caused salinization and water pollution

Stronger use of fossil fuels

Cultivation of monocultures

Social consequences

Displacement of subsistence farmers

Unemployment and rural exodus

Amplification of hierarchies between gender and social power inequalities

Dependency and danger of indebtedness due to borrowing

Health risks caused by the use of fertilizer

Source: Sprenger 2012

As a whole, the Green Revolution became an instrument for depoliticization of land issues in order to prevent redistributive land reforms and rebellion of the rural population. In regards to geopolitical considerations within the context of the cold war, the world food problem was perceived as a threat if underfed people became interested in communism and its promises. This led to an increased engagement of non-state actors such as the Rockefeller Foundation. Further, the Green Revolution was often regarded as an attempt to impose Western and especially US-American models of agriculture to other regions of the world. This approach is based on the core argument that due to the “formation of a capitalistic farmer class” the urban population will be provided with a constant supply of food, which further stabilizes and maintains power relations. On the positive side, the Green Revolution increased the amount of food per capita by 11 percent between 1970 and 1990 on a global scale. This was generated through a capitalistically organized agriculture, which opened up rural areas (Ibid.; Mc Michael 2010; Martens and Seitz 2015).

Since the 1960s attempts were made to implement a Green Revolution in SSA as well. In this regard, national seed systems based on colonial agricultural research, provision of subsidies and borrowing were constructed. Despite an increased use of fertilizer, the per capita agricultural output declined. There are many reasons for this failure: insufficient support by the national state, lack of infrastructure and the multitude of farming systems and crops. In comparison to Asia and Latin America greater challenges existed regarding climate, soil, geology, geography, diseases and pests. In addition to an unequal distribution of water resources a major cause for the continuing low agricultural capacity was

the privatization¹ and liberalization of the agricultural sector as part of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Brandt and Brüntrup 2012; Hoering 2007a). Escobar (1992) states:

“Planners thought that the agricultural economies of the Third World could be mechanically restructured to resemble the ‘modernized’ agriculture of the United States, overlooking completely not only the desires and aspirations of people, but the whole dynamics of economy, culture and society that circumscribe farming practices in the Third World. This type of management of life actually became a theatre of death (most strikingly in the case of the African famine), as increased production of food resulted, through a perverse shift, in more hunger.”

Concerning the prevailing problem of hunger on the African continent, a new initiative was launched. After similar attempts have failed in recent decades, the BMGF in collaboration with the Rockefeller Foundation² initiated AGRA in 2006. The proclaimed target of this PPP is to support millions of small farmers to escape poverty and hunger. Therefore a “market-led technology” approach was adopted and several measures were implemented such as the use of innovative practices to increase farm productivity by planting resilient crops³ and the application of synthetic fertilizer and pesticides. Moreover, biotechnology is regarded as a crucial pillar of these so-called ‘modern’ farming techniques. At the heart of all efforts is the introduction and training of so-called “agro-dealers”, who try to form a regional distribution network for agricultural inputs such as (hybrid) seeds, fertilizer and pesticides. An example is the “Malawi Agro-Dealer Strengthening Programme” (MASP) which is supported by AGRA. MASP promotes a market-driven approach by supporting small private stock companies to sell hybrid maize seeds and chemical pesticides, fertilizers and herbicides⁴ to farmers. It is argued that the lack of markets is a core problem due to insufficient possibilities for small farmers to generate income. In turn the purchase of agricultural inputs to boost productivity is restricted. Consequently, the access to markets and finance systems needs to be fostered by building partnerships with the private sector (Toenniessen et al. 2008; Scoones and Thompson 2011; Hoering 2007b; Martens and Seitz 2015).

Theoretical and Methodological Framework of Discourse Analysis

In order to analyse the German press discourse on the (New) Green Revolution the narrative discourse analysis by Viehöver (2004; 2011; 2012) was adopted and supplemented by the argumentative discourse analysis. This served to identify hegemonic actors. The methodological basis was a narration- and frame analysis which consists of five steps:

- 1) development of a question and hypothesis;
- 2) determination of a data set⁵;
- 3) creation of a codebook to define the categories and subcategories;
- 4) description of distinctive narratives⁶ and
- 5) formation of discourse coalitions.

¹ From Latin “privare” which means robbing.

² Both are philanthropic foundations which can be defined despite the lack of a single agreed understanding in accordance to the following criteria: “non-governmental, non-profit, self-managed by its own trustees and directors and promote charitable activities serving the common good” (Martens and Seitz 2015).

³ The underlying assumption is that for instance draught-tolerant maize varieties are labelled as “Climate Smart Agriculture” (CSA) which should encounter effects of the climate crisis (Ibid.).

⁴ Monsanto is the supplier of more than two third of all these products (Ibid.).

⁵ The dossier comprises 88 articles out of the 10 following newspapers which should represent the political spectrum of media in Germany: Die Zeit, Der Spiegel, Die Welt, Handelsblatt, Frankfurter Rundschau, Junge Welt, Tageszeitung (taz), Le Monde diplomatique, Süddeutsche Zeitung and Tagesspiegel.

For the primary literature references please contact the author (anika.mahla@inef.uni-due.de).

⁶ The terms narratives and narrations are used interchangeably.

The time period under consideration was determined by the discursive event when the AGRA was founded in 2006 and ended with the final review in September 2014. The analysis was conducted with MAXQDA software which suits the methodology of Grounded Theory quite well.

Argumentative Discourse Analysis (ADA)

The argumentative discourse approach focuses on discursive agency. Hajer (1995) argues that discourse needs to be done and defines it as “an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices”. Therefore, argumentation and formation of coalitions are essential for ADA. Storylines provide the basis for Hajer’s concept because they enable actors to insert their own interpretations by simply “sounding right” (black boxing⁷). They link interpretation and argumentation on a linguistic level and create the red thread as well as coherency. Additional functions of these storylines are the reduction of discursive complexity and narrations by provisioning of problem solutions and the positioning of actors. Storylines are key for discourse coalitions and are constructed through a set of these around a group of actors which impose their own ideas on others. The actors of a discourse coalition share the same definition of reality as well as common problem narrations based on “credibility, acceptance and trust” (Hajer 1997). Hegemony⁸ appears in the discourse through the successful establishment of a set of dominant storylines (discourse structuring) and the institutionalization of connected political ideas (Uther 2014; Hajer 2004; 2006; Viehöver 2011).

Narrative Discourse Analysis (NDA)

Viehöver connects with Hajer and asserts that actors create meaning and identity by using narratives in the sense of utterance. That is why he understands discourses as narrative⁹ and people as story-tellers (homo narrans). Discourses are determined by competing narrations. Narrations are described as the universal modus of communication. Viehöver proposes the following structural assumptions about them:

- 1) stories consist of individual episodes,
- 2) narratives have competing actants (hero/anti-hero, sender/receiver, object/assistant¹⁰) and 3) the units and actants are linked by a dramatic action-configuration (plot).

A typical structure of episodes starts with the description of the problem to ensure a common understanding. Furthermore, their causes as well as consequences of the problem are identified. Finally, an answer to the problem is presented which is based on a solution model and simultaneously includes consequences of the suggested solution. In the dynamic process of narrativization narrations can be changed and adopted in a selective way. For this reason, they can be decisive for the differentiation from other discourse coalitions. The actors which use narrative schemes don’t need to be aware of it. This is also applicable for belonging to a coalition. Narrations appear as process and object as well as content and form because they combine them (Viehöver 2001; 2011). The goal was to identify the narratives typical for the discourse about the Green Revolution. Therefore, the structure of actants and the belonging discourse coalitions will be determined by the use of categories which summarize and offer interpretations.

⁷ „A black box contains that which no longer needs to be reconsidered, those things whose contents have become a matter of indifference. The more elements one can place in black boxes - modes of thought, habits, forces and objects - the broader the construction one can raise.” (Callon and Latour 1981).

⁸ Gramsci (1991) states that hegemony develops through compulsion and consent.

⁹ With regard to Ricœur, narrations can be described as structuring structure which are structured themselves (Viehöver 2011).

¹⁰ Different actors can operate within double roles. Furthermore, actants can be differentiated along active and passive characteristics. Actants should not be put on one level with actors, because they can also contain objections such as a liveable future (see Greimas 1970).

Discourse Analysis of the Critical and Affirmative Coalition

Conflicting Narratives

The following table shows a heuristic comparison of narrative patterns about the New Green Revolution based on the structure of episodes according to Viehöver. Here the results are solely expressed in keywords. Two different narrations were identified and labeled as affirmative in favor of a New Green Revolution and one critical towards this plan. Thereby the affirmative narration calls for a slightly modified reprint of the Green Revolution which now should be implemented in SSA. The critical narration takes a diametrical position whereby the Green Revolution itself is seen as a problem. Nevertheless, besides fundamental differences, similarities could also be found and are illustrated here:

	<i>Affirmative</i>	<i>Critical</i>
<i>View of Problem</i>	Population growth	Green Revolution Genetic engineering Agro-Business
<i>Causes of problem</i>	Underproduction Subsistence farming Crop losses Growing demand Lack of capital and inputs	Poverty, Hunger, Malnutrition Land rights and grabbing Liberalization Distribution Subsidies Inadequate infrastructure Biofuels Food crisis and political problems Climate change and environmental problems
<i>Consequences of problem</i>	Protest Increasing demand for agricultural land	Environmental problems Monocultures Loss of biodiversity Soil depletion High consumption of water and energy Social problems Indebtedness Dependency Social inequality Rural exodus Population growth Monopolization Concentration of power Lack of democratic control
<i>Problem solutions</i>	New Green Revolution Biotechnology/Genetic engineering Technology transfer Artificial irrigation Loans/PPP	Health risk Agroecology/Organic farming Paradigm shift Localization Participation Access to land and resources
<i>Problem solutions</i>	Inputs and mechanization Transfer of knowledge Training of agro-dealers Free trade	Realignment of trade policy Local trade
	Sustainability ¹¹ Innovation Support of small-scale farmers and women Agricultural research Nutrient nitrogen	

¹¹ Alternatively, sustainability could serve at the same time as consequence of the proposed solutions.

<i>Solution model</i>	Food security	Food sovereignty
	Right to food	
<i>Consequences of the solution</i>	Productivity increase	Environmental and resource protection
	Improvement of health	Biodiversity
	Integration in value chains	Soil fertility
	Market access	Multifunctionality
	Generation of jobs	Preservation of local knowledge
	Increasing income	Social justice
	Modernization	Democratization
	Yield improvement	
	Poverty eradication	
	Mitigation of carbon dioxide	

On the basis of the episode structure the existence of two contrary narrations could be shown. Despite substantial differences between both, similarities exist. This is true particularly regarding the view of the problem (poverty, hunger and malnutrition) and the causes of the problem (e.g. food crisis, lack of infrastructure, political problems, climate change as well as environmental problems). However, it turned out that specific for each narration, different interpretations of the issues were given. This for instance became clear on the topic of agricultural research as the shared idea of problem solution, whereby one narration favors a diversity of seedfast and the other prefers hybrid or genetic engineered seeds.

The key message of the **affirmative narrative** is that hunger and malnutrition in the Global South can be eradicated primarily by technology (e.g. genetic engineering), knowledge transfers and market access. Therefore, innovations and the cooperation with food and agricultural industries should be improved as they can lead to a significant increase in food production. Subsequently, productivity will increase and agricultural production as well as trade will become integrated in value chains that ensure market access. Furthermore, incomes will increase. Population growth is perceived as the core problem¹² hence to the ongoing construction as threat for famines and conflicts over natural resources in accordance to the argument of increasing demand in emerging countries. Another root cause for hunger is seen in crop loss. The underlying concept is the well-known claim for food security.

The **critical narrative** neglects the claim that the lack of inputs and a growing underproduction constitute main causes for food insecurity. Contrary, it is stated that issues such as the distribution and access to land as well as land grabbing and an overall trend of liberalization causes hunger and malnutrition. The past Green Revolution itself is perceived as a main problem because of its tremendous social and environmental consequences that accompany the promotion of an industrial agricultural model. The critical narrative is in favor for a paradigmatic shift towards food sovereignty. This means a localized, participative way of agriculture which has to be implemented and should be ensured in accordance with agroecological methods. The access to land and resources plays a major role in this regard. A democratized food system requires a realignment of trade policies. Subsequently, the environment shall be protected and local knowledge needs to be preserved in order to contribute to social justice.

Discourse Coalitions and Actant Structure

Each narration is used by a discourse coalition which are named affirmative and critical respectively. The mentioned actors within the discourse concerning the New Green Revolution are listed in the fol-

¹² Another perspective could also be that population growth is a cause of the problem in regard to hunger and malnutrition. Simultaneously the Green Revolutions also speeded up population growth due to the increased production of food. But due to its significance it is classified as one of the main problems which is constructed around the legitimation of the (New) Green Revolution.

lowing table where they are assigned to one of the competing coalition. Moreover, it is an ideal-typical dichotomy¹³ where the actors of the coalitions according to Hajer's definition refer on common arguments and storylines which can be understood as reductions of the narration. Additionally, they are reproduced through different institutional mechanisms. For instance, the shared affirmative storyline of the New Alliance for Food Security by the Group of 7 (G7) claims the future of world nutrition can only be secured by a New Green Revolution. A particular efficacy belongs to the affirmative narration which demands a transfer of technology in order to modernize agriculture. In contrast, the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) as one of the key actor of the critical discourse coalition postulates the solution for hunger can be found in agrarian change from the industrialized model of agriculture towards an agro-ecological cultivation.

¹³ The assignment to one of the two coalitions should not be considered static, because within organizations change processes are also going on. Thus, for example the establishment of the critical actor IAASTD was initiated by affirmative agents such as the United Nations (UN) and World Bank. Two different strands of the affirmative coalition exist: 1) a neoliberal (e.g. WTO) and 2) a reformistic (e.g. FAO) one.

	<i>Affirmative Discourse Coalition</i>	<i>Critical Discourse Coalition</i>
<i>Multilateral Institutions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) - UN Secretary-General Ki Moon - Former UN Secretary-General Annan - UN Millennium Development Project - World Food Programme (WFP) - International Fund for Agricultural Development of the UN (IFAD) - Former European Union (EU) Commission President, Barroso - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) - World Bank, IMF - World Trade Organization (WTO) - Islamic Development Bank - New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)/Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) - Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) - Former UN, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, De Schutter - Conference of the UN on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) - Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) of the EU
<i>Non-profit organizations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rockefeller Foundation - BMGF - AGRA - Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) - Africa Harvest - World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Movements: Via Campesina, Network Copagen, Peoples Food Sovereignty Forum, Ghana Federation of Agricultural Producers (GFAP), Landless Workers' Movement (MST), Papaye Peasant Movement (MPP) - Locale Seed Networks, Seed Campaign - Development Organizations: German Forum on Environment & Development, German for World Hunger Aid, Bread for the World, Worldvision, FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN), Misereor, Genetic Resources Action International (GRAIN), AgraWatch, INKOTA - Environmental Organizations: Friends of the Earth, Nature Conservation Association of Germany (NABU)
<i>Industry</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agro-Business: Manufacturer of Fertilizer, Seed, Pesticides, Food Process Industry and Trade (e.g. Monsanto, Cargill, DuPont, BASF, Bayer and Syngenta) - Lobby: International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) 	
<i>Research and Science</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CGIAR, Africa Rice Center - Food Policy Research Institute - Seed Banks (e.g. Spitzbergen, Gatersleben) - International Institute of Crop Research of Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IAASTD - Worldwatch Institute - International Institute for Sustainable Development - African Institute for Economic and Social Development (Inades) - International Institute of Agriculture (IITA) and Nitrogen to Africa (N2Africa)
<i>Other</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Alliance for Food Security by the G7, German Food Partnership (GFP) 	

One of the most powerful exemplary actors of the affirmative discourse coalition are the World Bank, FAO, IFAD, Monsanto, Cargill, AGRA and CGIAR. On the opposite, the former Special Rapporteur on the right to food De Schutter, the peasant organization Via Campesina and the MST as important representatives of social movements belong to the critical discourse coalition.

Subsequently, the actant structure will be explained and linked with the relevant discourse actors. The sender embodies the source of values and the receiver represents the target audience for those. Therefore, the authors of the press articles in the different media can be seen as senders. The recipients in terms (i.e. the target group) are the people affected by hunger – in particular small farmers in SSA - according to the respective view of the problem. The object refers to the fruition of a desire or goal by the subject, for instance the proposed solution models food security and food sovereignty assigned by the two different coalitions. The role of the hero is crucial in regard to the implementation of values if they are supported by the helpers who could also assist the anti-heroes. Regarding the discourse on the Green Revolution the heroes differ according to the narrative. On the one hand, the affirmative narrative applies this role to agricultural research and technology as such. On the other hand, the community of small farmers and the desired harmony with nature can be interpreted as heroes of the critical narrative. Population growth¹⁴ is perceived as a central anti-hero within the affirmative narrative. Classical anti-heroes of the critical narrative are organizations like the WTO which promote liberalization and enable the implementation of interests by multinational companies such as Monsanto. Both stories and coalitions refer to science and their relevant actors as assistants in order to legitimize their own positions (Greimas 1970; Viehöver 2001).

AGRA¹⁵ is a genuine helper in terms of linking the New Green Revolution with genetic engineering. The following table shows actors and the respective corresponding discourse coalitions in regards to genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

	<i>Affirmative Discourse Coalition</i>	<i>Critical Discourse Coalition</i>
National governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - USA, Canada - Vatican - Argentina, Brazil - Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Kenya, South Africa, Egypt, Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda - India, China, Philippines - Iraq, Afghanistan - Spain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zimbabwe - Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela - EU, Germany - New Zealand

GMOs are legalized in South Africa, Egypt and Burkina Faso. Other African countries of the affirmative discourse coalition carry out tests with GM crops (Martens and Seitz 2015).

The Hegemony of the Affirmative Narrative and Discourse Coalition

In reference to Hajer (2004) a hegemonic discourse occurs if a coalition succeeds in structuring and institutionalizing¹⁶. The two discourse coalitions are characterized by a significant asymmetry: the affirmative discourse coalition has more influential and well-known actors such as the World Bank, BMGF or agro-businesses as compared to the critical one, which bases its support on a smaller lobby.

¹⁴ An important storyline in this context is the great Asian hunger which is mentioned and serves to explain the issue of land grabbing.

¹⁵ The position of AGRA towards GMOs remains open. After initial funding they dropped out of this business. But the ongoing cooperation with proponents such as Monsanto are illustrated by Daño (2007).

¹⁶ A discourse structuring exists if a certain narration is used by many actors. Hence frequency and proliferation can serve as indicators. Subsequently, a discourse institutionalizing is given if the discourse itself becomes manifested in a certain institutional arrangement. If both are met then a discourse coalition becomes hegemonic (Hajer 2004, Uther 2014).

This is particularly true regarding finance. The total net assets and liabilities of AGRA (2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2014) between 2010 and 2014¹⁷ amounted more than US \$ 818 million.

A simple quantitative analysis (sample size of 73) within the assessed discourse showed that 45 actors belong to the affirmative coalition whereas only 28 actors pertain to the critical coalition. Regarding the frequency of referring to the actors comes the result that a significant majority of 83 percent the affirmative discourse was mentioned in the German press discourse. Within the affirmative coalition multilateral institutions were predominantly represented with a share of 40 percent. The institutionalization of the affirmative narrative is reflected in treaties such as the “Agreement on Agriculture” (AoA) by the WTO or the “Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights” (TRIPS) and the “International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plant” (UPOV) in the field of intellectual property rights and seed policies. Subsequently, an institutionalization of the affirmative coalition predominantly leads the discourse.

Beyond grant-making AGRA is a highly influential actor in shaping the discourse and governance of global food security and agricultural development such as setting priorities for agricultural research and policy-making¹⁸. As an influential organization AGRA¹⁹ is well linked with governments as well as agro-business and international organizations such as the UNDP or FAO. This includes financial contributions as well as the promotion of ideas and choices on top-level personnel in relevant leadership positions²⁰ which lead to “pursuing forms of private diplomacy” (Martens and Seitz 2015).

The Discursive Gap of Gender

Various topics were not or insufficiently addressed in the examined discourse fragments and thus identified as discursive gaps. These include, for example the role of migrants in the agriculture of industrialized countries. In addition, the radical decoupling of urbanization from industrialization is not mentioned, which contributes to the fact that millions of people are forced to live in slums in the southern hemisphere (McMichael 2010, see also Davis 2006).

The ambivalence of the Green Revolution is that it increased yield and inequality at the same time. This can be seen for example in regard to the gender which is largely excluded in the German press discourse.

Although the support of women was postulated by both discourse coalitions, it rather appeared as a subordinate issue and failed to take women’s importance into account. Fundamental to this is the assumption that gender is a process of social construction, which is accompanied by various gender-specific attributions (see Butler 1991). Regarding the discourse on the Green Revolution the problem of multiple discrimination exists: the more dimensions of discrimination (e.g. gender, ethnicity, race) apply to a group, the higher the likelihood that their human rights - like the right to food among others - are violated. The different forms of discrimination found their expression in political, economical and geographical marginalization, which means that social groups who are affected by hunger also lack opportunities to influence political decisions. They are often economically disadvantaged and displaced to areas where difficult agricultural conditions prevail. Women and girls are particularly impacted since they represent 60 to 70 percent of the world’s hungry population. The examined discourse widely neglected that women are often denied access to resources such as land, water, biodiversity and energy. Hence their livelihood security is threatened and in result a gender specific dependency exists. Particularly serious is the situation concerning access to land, as due to legal and

¹⁷ The numbers date back to the annual reports of AGRA. Numbers are missing in between the years 2011 and 2014.

¹⁸ AGRA influences directly the “formulation and revision of African governments’ agricultural policies and regulations on such issues as land and seeds” (Martens and Seitz 2015). Hence 19 “Policy Action Nodes” (PAN) were launched in Tanzania, Mali, Mozambique and Ghana. The PAN in Ghana was involved in the adoption of the Biosafety Act in 2011 which permits the research on GMOs and their import (Ibid.).

¹⁹ Kofi Annan for instance was chairman of AGRA.

²⁰ Different key positions in international organizations, global partnerships or even governments are used by the BMGF to exert influence on agricultural policies (Ibid.).

cultural barriers with regard to the inheritance, use and ownership of land in SSA, only 15 percent of the farmland is owned by women²¹ (Schweighöfer 2014; Herre 2013; Wichterich 2004).

Wichterich (2004) draws from her research that the more technical, expertocratic, scientific or political action practices are determined, the more they are male-dominated. In the light of victimization agricultural interventions aim for gender equality as a normative frame of reference. An associated ambivalence concern is that the focus on participation or self-organizing capacity of women in decentralization concepts often bears the risk to romanticize precolonial and preglobal working and living conditions by underestimating internal power structures and conflicts of interest.

During the Green Revolution social dislocation of women happened in many places as the new technologies were mostly used by privileged men. Moreover, the overwhelming masculine exodus resulted in a significant additional burden on the remaining women. The affirmative narrative proved the importance of seed. This links to the following problem: knowledge and control over seed embodies local power of women which is undermined by the import of seeds and the ongoing commercialization within the agricultural sector. Hence their knowledge and skills tend to appear unnecessary or worthless. Furthermore, they are perceived as an obstacle for the use of resources in an industrial way which is propagated by the Green Revolution (Ibid.; Fent 2012; Lachkovics 1999; Sprenger 2012).

However, the inclusion of local knowledge by women in agricultural research for sustainable development is essential to overcome male-dominated and -centred development concepts, the exploitation of nature and woman. Overall, it became obvious that both narratives address the issue of gender inequality inadequately.

Conclusion and Problematization of AGRA

“Hunger is not an issue of charity. It is an issue of justice” (Jacques Diouf)

The study aims at portraying the competing narratives about the (New) Green Revolution in SSA by outlining two diverging stories in accordance with the (1) affirmative and (2) critical discourse coalition. Both coalitions focus on improving the livelihood conditions of the poor in rural areas by eradicating hunger and malnutrition. The chosen approaches however differ significantly. On the one hand the affirmative narrative aims at generating a New Green Revolution based on an industrialization of agriculture and on the other hand the critical discourse coalition is in favor of agrarian change towards promoting agroecological farming. A hegemonic position of the affirmative narrative and the corresponding discourse coalition has been proven by elaborating the structure and composition of the German press discourse on the New Green Revolution.

Subsequently, the competing narratives differ according to their preferred systems of agricultural production. Proponents of the New Green Revolution describe hunger as a problem of producers (farmers), as opposed to followers of the critical discourse coalition who pledge for organic farming, self-determination and changes in the global agrarian regime. The latter proponents perceive hunger as a problem of distribution as food production increases more than population growth. Consequently, the affirmative discourse coalition chooses a top-down approach²² in accordance with a certain “technic-optimism” whereas the critical coalition focuses on supporting the participation of small-scale farming in line with a bottom-up and pro-poor approach. The study could outline the New Green Revolution as a complex process of social construction.

²¹ However, serious regional differences can be reported, as for example in Mali the proportion in women hand is only 5 percent and in Botswana about 30 percent of farmer’s land (FAO 2011).

²² GRAIN (2014) claims that AGRA follows an overall top-down approach as research programs and technologies are neither carried out nor based on the knowledge of smallholder farmers. Patel (2013) states: “smallholder farmers are asked to guide the second Green Revolution [but] it seems as if they are asked to do so in ways that conform to an agenda that has already been written. Their voices matter, but only when they say what they ought.”

In regard to AGRA in the sense of increasing “big philanthropy” the idea that “entrepreneurs can save the world” (Forbes 2013) is put forward. It can be stated that the increasing share of such philanthropic giving reflects the other side of the coin of growing inequality between rich and poor. Ideas that are in line with AGRA’s approach raise several concerns such as:

- 1) Growing influence on policies and agenda-setting as well as the uncertainties if global norms and standards will be upheld;
- 2) “Philanthrocapitalism” in terms of applying a business-logic on profit-making to specific activities (focus on “technological quick-win solution” in agriculture and principles such as intensification, efficiency and increase in production);
- 3) Fragmentation and weakening of global governance such as the UN²³ and representative democracies²⁴;
- 4) Instability of finance for the provision of public goods through privatization and dependency on voluntary and unpredictable channels of financing;
- 5) A lack of monitoring and accountability mechanisms as activities of AGRA are only accountable to their own boards or trustees (Martens and Seitz 2015).

Furthermore, there is a tendency towards a Western-biased support. As an example BMGF spent about 80 percent of its budget for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and research institutions to recipients that are based in the US and Europe. The overall-focus of the affirmative coalition lies on advancing agricultural technologies accompanied by market-driven approaches. However, structural and political barriers such as existing inequalities reflected in trade liberalization agreements²⁵ tend to be widely neglected. Another common critique on AGRA’s practices focuses on their attempts to open African markets for the US agro-business, always under the guise of eradicating hunger on the continent. By holding out the prospect of increasing private markets for seeds and fertilizers, AGRA provides incentives for agro-businesses that are inclined to engage in SSA. The commercialization²⁶ of agricultural value-chains thus appears as a genuine goal. Furthermore, the process is associated with a valorization of nature and its agricultural biodiversity by the biotechnological engineering for agricultural production. In turn capital accumulation as a characteristic of the capitalist system is permitted. In order to ensure political acceptance, land rights are defined and the concentration of land encouraged. Here conflicts are inevitable that’s why valorization always remains contested and unfinished (Hoering 2007a). Moreover, commercialization buries the risk for farmers to become dependent on corporate interests if they purchase hybrid seeds and other agricultural inputs. The decreasing number of traditional seeds and change to hybrid seeds or GMOs contributes to further losses of biodiversity and hampers sovereignty for farmers. Therefore, AGRA is accused to follow some kind of a “neo-colonial plan”.

The differences between the old and the New Green Revolutions appear blurry. In times of accelerated neoliberalism, there is a „shift in the role of the state from directing policy and shaping agricultural development to providing a legal, financial and regulatory environment amenable to agricultural research and development now led by the private sector” (Seshia and Scoones 2003). An example is the

²³ The UN System Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN) is responsible for the harmonization of food and nutrition policies within the UN but remains underfunded and weak.

²⁴ It can be argued that “multi-stakeholder partnerships implicitly devalue the role of governments, parliaments and intergovernmental decision-making bodies” because global partnerships and vertical funds tend to be isolated as opposed to being well coordinated approaches for solutions to hunger and malnutrition (Martens and Seitz 2015).

²⁵ For instance, the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the EU and several countries in SSA that follow the purpose to “remove import tariffs on agricultural products and enable rich countries to import these products at far less cost” (Martens and Seitz 2015).

²⁶ Commodification and financialisation serve as synonyms. An example is the commercialisation of seeds on the legal base of patents accompanied by a tremendous tendency towards processes of monopolization.

agro-dealer programme of AGRA. Another new feature of the New Green Revolution is the suggestion of genetic engineering as part of the technological solution. Additionally, AGRA claims to follow a sustainable way of agriculture, but the question remains to what extent the problems arising as consequences of an industrial farming based on chemical inputs shall be prevented. There seems to be a tendency of greenwashing and a use of the concept as an empty buzzword²⁷ with no concrete recommendations. Despite some improvements made by the New Green Revolution, the critical discourse coalition outlines the lack of differences neither in the procedure nor concerning the strategy towards the old Green Revolution. As an exception could serve the interest of BMGF towards agroecological farming. In conclusion, Patel (2013) speaks of a “Long Green Revolution” to emphasize the continuity of the process. Therefore, evidence for instance derives from the logic of progression, which is reflected within agro-genetic engineering to address a simplistic view of lacking technology and inputs as roots of poverty and hunger. Risks such as structural discrimination and an inequitable distribution of land remain largely hidden. Poverty eradication in line with an agro-industrial modernization process is based on interventions. Those are justified by a technocratic and depoliticizing comprehension of agricultural problems (Ferguson 2007). This constructs a reductionist discourse on development, in which farmers are only perceived as individual market participants and the diversity of their adaptation and survival strategies developed in subsistence farming are widely neglected. The affirmative narrative contributes to the legitimization of the current power relations within the global food regime.

In contrast, the concept of food sovereignty favored by the critical narrative aims at providing more control over food and agriculture for farmers and consumers likewise. This is reflected in certain aspects such as the focus on production conditions and the access to resources such as land, seed and water. The broad ignorance of power relations within the approach of food security is counteracted by referring to how food is produced and who processes it as well as its distribution and consumption. The declaration of Nyéléni states:

“Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (Forum for Food Sovereignty 2007).

Aiming at a democratization of the food production neither autarky nor pure subsistence farming should be preferred. Instead a decentralized and bottom-up approach should be adopted, which is continuously adapted to the social, economic and territorial conditions, aspired as the contrary of a blueprint such as AGRA. The core question towards eradicating hunger should focus on “How can we feed the world?” but rather “How can the hungry feed themselves?” (Herre 2013). This has a particular relevance due to the continuity of agricultural exports since the colonial era. These exports increased ever since and constitute a destructive potential regarding the energy-intensive effects of an industrialized agriculture (McMichael 2010). For a long-term solution profound changes towards sustainability need to take place, which includes the internalization of ecological and social costs. In order to create strategies that counteract hegemonic interests of the affirmative discourse coalition, power relations need to be outlined and analyzed. Interdisciplinary public agricultural research – particularly on organic farming – needs to be fostered in order to generate changes in agricultural processes.

Agricultural policies should focus on the local context in order to ensure a successful enforcement of the right to food by preserving valuable local knowledge and the biodiversity. An increased threat originating from climate change as well as a finite supply of natural resources suggests that the ongo-

²⁷ Laclau suggests the term „empty signifier“ when an „abstract cipher [is used] that can be charged with different meanings“ (Keller 2013).

ing extractivism²⁸ needs to be replaced by a socially just and ecologically sustainable model of agriculture. This could in turn contribute to an increased resilience of farmers. Sustainability in regard to farming depends on whether integrated agricultural, environmental and health policies succeed. This is contingent on the extent of fair trade policies, gender equality and land rights. Overall, the specific economic, political and social measures for agrarian justice remain discursively disputed. The affirmative narrative provides technical solutions to eradicate hunger. This approach however already failed to materialize during the previous phase of the Green Revolution. An ongoing hunger crisis can only be decreased in line with significant economic and social policy changes.

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²⁸ Extractivism refers to the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources which are becoming scarcer. This process is extended to alleged unproductive territories such as mining, forestry, oil and agro-business (Svampa 2012).

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Global governance/politics, climate justice & agrarian/social justice: linkages and challenges

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About the Author(s)

Anika Mahla holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences and a Master's Degree in International Relations and Development Policy. She completed internships in the realm of climate change at the NGOs Germanwatch and Climate Action Network Tanzania. Anika gathered academic experience as scientific assistant at the Centre for Global Cooperation Research in Duisburg and at the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research in Leipzig. Currently, she is a PhD candidate at the Institute for Development and Peace (INEF) at the University Duisburg-Essen. There she is involved in a research project on "Ways out of extreme poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity". Her research interests include poverty eradication, food regimes, food sovereignty, social security and gender. Furthermore, she is involved in civil society activities with nyéléni and attac.