Vernacularizations of gender discourses in Kazakhstan: A microethnographic view on interactions at the workplace of an international development organization

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The past twenty years of independent Central Asian states have witnessed the growth of a transnational epistemic network of gender experts, and today's politics of gender are to a large extent influenced by gender discourses stemming from global development thinking. This article traces vernacularizations of gender and development discourses in the office of an international organization located in Kazakhstan. On the basis of audiovisual recording material made during a journalistic training the organization hosted, we provide an in-depth analysis of two situations with the aim of advancing our understanding of the vernacularization of development discourses in human interaction. The microethnographic method employed is based on work in the traditions of ethnomethodological interaction analysis and linguistic anthropology. Amongst other things, our example cases show how gender and development expertise can serve as conversational resources for social positioning and that a multi-modal analysis of human action is crucial for a holistic understanding of vernacularizations of development discourses.

Keywords: gender; development; Kazakhstan; ethnomethodology; microethnography; conversation analysis

At a recent political convention of Zhas Otan, the youth wing of Kazakhstan's governing party Nur Otan, President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who is also former First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party, granted that he endorses a Muslim future while hastening to add: "But forcing people to cover their heads with Arab clothes and pulling our girls and women back into medieval times is not our way" (KAZINFORM 2012, translation by the authors). In his speech one can identify a strategy of secular ruling elites to keep more orthodox or radical forms of Islam at bay. At the same time, Nazarbayev draws from a discourse that enjoys considerable support in contemporary Kazakhstan. The idea that there is a culturally specific adoption of Islam, namely in a nomadic guise, is part of common-sense knowledge of many Central Asians (Mendikulova 2008, 29).

Be that as it may, this interesting way of thinking about the relationship between Islam and gender reflects just one specific position within a very diverse field of current development work and reasoning in Kazakhstan. Accordingly, the current focus on gender and Islam (Liu 2011, 120) in scholarly debates represents just one, albeit extremely prominent, issue of societal and academic relevance. One might find this a somewhat narrow

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focus that tends to overlook the fact that in the global development net Kazakhstan occupies a point of intersection that is being crossed by a multiplicity of discourses and actors. Thus, in her review of current gender politics, Deniz Kandiyoti (2007, 610) identified, in addition to secular ruling elites and transnational Islamic actors, international aid agencies as one more important type of player who partakes in shaping the terrain of today’s gender orders in Central Asia.

Unsurprisingly, much analysis of development and gender discourses in Kazakhstan have often focused on policy papers and the big players. There has, however, also emerged an ethnographic research tradition that pays attention to transformations of gender orders induced through activities of the development community. Studies in this tradition, moreover, remind us of such obvious but sometimes overlooked facts that, for example, women’s activism and struggles for empowerment have a tradition dating back long before the arrival of the international donor community (Zellerer and Vyortkin 2004) and current gender activists are not necessarily willing to deal with international donors (Snajdr 2005).

The present article follows this ethnographic tradition and turns its analytical gaze to some of the interstices of development thinking and work in Kazakhstan, namely to the small daily events in which development and gender are being negotiated – ordinarily, sometimes unnoticed, and for many of its practitioners rather unspectacularly. It was the workplace of an international development organization, where we began searching for ‘vernacularizations’ of global gender discourses. Because we expected local appropriations to take place not only in the medium of the spoken word and at times below the threshold of awareness, our approach was microethnographic (Streeck and Mehus 2004). This allowed us bringing into analytic view such phenomena as emotions, non-propositional argumentation strategies, and the sequential production of meaning in a multi-modal, material environment. With its microethnography of development our paper tries to contribute to the project of ‘empirically grounding globalization theories’ (Lachenmann 2008). An additional intent of this paper is to consider the relevance of ethnomethodological conversation and interaction analysis for Central Asian studies.

Negotiating development

In our understanding, development is neither a unified, homogeneous discourse legitimating neoliberal rule, as certain ‘post-structuralist’ approaches would have it (Diawara 2000, 363-366), nor a purely Western enterprise, even if one might grant that global development discourses were born from a specific North-American / European setting (Escobar 1995, chap. 2). However, instead of conceptualizing development in terms of one-sided knowledge transfers, it seems much more pertinent to look at what Gudrun Lachenmann and Petra Dannecker (2008) call ‘negotiating development’, where development is understood as a form of knowledge production from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge. This brings into view processes of negotiating ideas, visions, and concepts of development at multiple levels, be it the global level of United Nations conferences and policy making or the workplace of a local human rights non-governmental organization (NGO). At different social sites one may expect to find different visions of development and gender. The conceptual shift from ‘women’ to ‘gender’ in international development is a good example for this theoretical perspective. For international aid agencies, ‘gender’ became a salient concept and serious efforts to ‘mainstream gender’ were undertaken only after the 4th World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. Prior to this, however, feminists working in
international development agencies, activists of the international women’s movement, and certain NGOs prepared the ground for such a shift when they started academic discussions on “gender” already in the 1980s (Rathgeber 2005, 582). Concepts like ‘gender mainstreaming’ and ‘gender equality’ remain, nevertheless, highly contested, even though certain policy papers convey the impression that a broad consensus may be taken for granted.

The legal anthropologist Sally Engle Merry enquired into local appropriations of transnational human rights concepts and asked: “How do they move across the gap between a cosmopolitan awareness of human rights and local sociocultural understandings of gender, family, and justice?” (2006, 39). She calls the processes in which transnational discourses are adopted in local settings 'vernacularizations' and suggests that meanings of development (including 'human rights') discourses are remade in the vernacular. Her perspective implies studying ‘trajectories’ of development and human rights concepts, for example, by paying attention to the ways people talk about human rights at different stages of such trajectories (Levitt and Merry 2009, 446). Crucial actors in these processes are the 'people in the middle' or the 'vernacularizers' (Ibid. 449) of human rights and development discourses.

Vernacularizers are also knowledge brokers and one of their specific problems is that they “must walk a fine line between too much replication, in which case the new ideas will lose their appeal to local communities, and too much hybridity, in which case the reforms will loose the support of the global community, including its funding and publicity” (Merry 2006, 49). Thus, in a context of governments that promote ‘traditional’ gender orders, gender activism is permanently under threat of being attacked as a foreign, Western import that does not fit into local culture (Kandiyoti 2007, 615). Images of the West, likewise, sometimes serve as counter-images to specific versions of local culture that legitimize practices of male control (Werner 2009, 328).

In this paper we use the theoretical concept of 'vernacularization' in order to bring into view the procedural character of negotiating development, especially when we look at what happens to discourses on their travels through the different levels and social sites mentioned. Merry’s theoretical conceptualization was criticized for a too static understanding of the relation between the global and the local (Wyrod 2008, 802). Gudrun Lachenmann also criticizes the static notion of 'local knowledge' in development research and planning. A possible danger of a ready-made distinction between local and non-local knowledge is to label certain groups of a population as 'poor women-headed households', 'grassroots', or 'indigenous women' (Lachenmann 2004, p. 132). In order to avoid difficulties associated with this and to develop a better understanding of how concepts like 'empowerment of women' are negotiated between different types of knowledge, Lachenmann suggests to look at different types of knowledge (like lay and expert) not as 'closed units', but in terms of processes of knowledge production, where 'knowledge is always produced and hybridised in interactive processes, in arenas whose boundaries are permanently shifting and becoming translocal' (Lachenmann 2004, p. 124).

As we understand the notion of ‘negotiating development’ in terms of processes that are empirically observable in human interaction, definitions of the respective societal level are part of peoples' interactive moves when it becomes situationally relevant. This consideration relieves the researcher from the burden of defining societal levels (global, local, transnational etc.) a priori. They are simply seen as outcomes of the studied events.
Method

If one asks people about their understanding and experiences with certain ideas or concepts of development, one risks missing important aspects of the interactional work being done in the process of local appropriations. Moreover, asking someone in the frame of an interview situation, one is likely to receive answers conforming to predefined genres of communication (Briggs 1986). Within the overall framework of genres of communication, the interview can be seen as a sibling of 'reconstructive genres of communication' (Bergmann and Luckmann 1995). As such, interviews must be analysed not only from a point of view that considers their situational embeddedness, but also such factors as the researcher's gender, socio-economic status, or ethnicity must be taken into account ("How am I, as a director of this NGO, to represent our organization to a researcher from this specific country and this specific institution?"). Interviews are helpful for facilitating people's formulations of past experiences. However, if one is interested not only in retrospective accounts, one might turn to situations as they ordinarily happen, ideally without even the researcher's presence. An additional problem of interviews is that they are not really helpful when studying non-discursive aspects of negotiating development, that is, knowledge often described under such notions as 'practical', 'tacit', or 'implicit' knowledge: for an interviewee, it can amount to a difficult task to explain and verbalize how he or she made sense of a certain concept or past event.

Therefore, ethnography comes into mind as an alternative method. Ethnographers observe in situ how people interact in a given situation, for example, how they negotiate development concepts at an international conference. We very much endorse procedural ethnographic approaches that show a somewhat less obtrusive stance in terms of their possible influence on the social site in question. In view of our research question, however, there are certain shortcomings of ethnography as well. Ethnographers tend to bring to the research field their own conceptual and practical baggage. This may hamper not only a sound analysis of observational data, but the observational process itself. The ethnographer's goal is observation of what is going on around him or her, and his or her attention is neither free-floating nor all encompassing. Professional not less than lay observation methods presuppose that the ability to understand is to a certain extent already given, and usually it is given as a taken for granted ability, that is, as something that goes without saying.

As we are interested in specific details of human interaction, our method, therefore, cannot solely rely on ethnography in its traditional mould. In their attempt to overcome neo-Platonist research methodologies, Christian Meyer and Nikolaus Schareika (2009a, 2, 2009b) propose the term 'participant audition' for a method of data collection that builds on ethnography's observational stance, but amends it with recording technology and stresses the unobtrusive stance of the researcher more than classic participant observation does. An important advantage of recorded data of 'naturally-occurring' interaction over reconstructed data is that it preserves the original structure of meaning production, which post hoc can be analysed by the researcher repeatedly, rigorously, and with analytical distance. Through working with audio-visual recordings of 'naturally-occurring' interaction, it becomes possible to trace the interaction sequences within which development concepts are deployed and meanings are (re)produced and transformed (cf. Silverman 2007, 83).

The following sequential analysis looks at two separate events which took place in the office space of an international development organization in Kazakhstan. Both events are topically, spatially, and temporally linked, as a gender topic discussed during the first event
reappears in the second event, four days later. The background to these events was that the organization provided technical and financial support for a six-day training on journalistic praxis for about 15 Kazakhstani students. The idea for organizing such training originated in the hands of Tamara, a local journalist who is a friend of Kristina, a local staff member of the organization. Kristina also brought Tamara together with Larissa, another journalist who supported Tamara during the six days. We participated in this workshop as, mostly, non-participant observers and made audiovisual recordings (about 20 hours). The bulk of our analysis deals with the first event.

**Kitchen-table talk**

The first event took place on the second day of the training, after the students had left and the three women moved to the office kitchen. It was itself part of a larger conversation (about three and a half hours) between Kristina, Larissa and Tamara. The three women's conversation covered different topics, but a central concern was the foregone day of training with the students. An important question from the perspective of Larissa and Tamara was whether they could prospectively organize further workshops or even start a series of trainings that would take place on a regular basis. What kind of technical and human resources would it take? How would it be financed? And who could finance it? These were important questions of this conversation, and Kristina was the ideal person for discussing them as she is known for her expertise in the local development scene. Moreover, Kristina is very familiar with gender politics and has acquired expertise in this sphere as well.

In this situation, one of us was present. The sociologist's role was less that of an active interlocutor than of a witness. We had asked permission for making video and audio recordings of the events. An option would have been to set up the recording devices and then leave the scene. But we felt that in the given situation to do so would have been rather inappropriate, not merely for methodical reasons, but much more in view of the relationship between researchers and researched.

In order to develop our understanding of the paths through which gender and development discourses find their way into everyday life, let us take a look at the three women's talk some seconds prior to the moment gender became a central topic of their conversation.

(Kri = Kristina, Tam = Tamara, Lar = Larissa)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kri</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Kri</td>
<td>hh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>nu ladno;</td>
<td>well;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>e[st]=</td>
<td>h there [is=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Tam</td>
<td>[=togda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[=so</td>
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| 07 |     | smotrite nu khorosho vot po[avi]las' taKAa ide:a da, see ok [there came into being this idea right,
Looking at lines 01 to 04, one finds a conversational phenomenon that has been studied in much detail and was called 'opening up closings' by Emanuel Schegloff and Harvey Sacks (1973). Kristina’s utterance of ‘nu ladno’ does pretty much the same as the English ‘well’ in similar situations: Kristina shows that she is willing to close the conversation. She received Larissa’s attention already after her breathing in (line 01), but Tamara turns her gaze towards Kristina only when she utters the word ‘ladno’.

At the lines following this implicit announcement of the conversation’s closing, Tamara and Kristina apparently talk at cross purposes: Kristina continues her talk and amends it with an assessment of prior talk. Tamara starts her own turn almost at the same time as Kristina (the square brackets at lines 05 and 06 mark overlapping talk). While Kristina continues in a calm, normal mood, Tamara’s incipient talk is noticeably faster and her timbre slightly higher than usual. Apparently, she gets into negotiating who will have the floor, i.e., who will talk and who will listen. For Tamara it is important here not to accept the announced closing of the conversation, for, obviously, she has an interest in its continuation. Topically her utterance somewhat collides with Kristina’s (lines 05 to 9): Kristina is summing up their foregone conversation in a very short account, typical for closings of conversations, whereas Tamara’s utterance can be heard as a topic opener that announces more talk to come and is thereby soliciting attention (her gaze quickly moves from Kristina to Larissa, from Larissa to the researcher, and then back to Kristina). Kristina’s utterance of ‘nepokhannoe pole’ (an unploughed field) refers to possibilities of elaborating a programme for further workshops or trainings, as journalistic education is still an under-represented area of work for Kazakhstani NGOs. Tamara too refers back to this prior conversational topic, but, seemingly, for her there are still urgent things in need of further discussion. Kristina leaves the floor to Tamara and assures her willingness to listen (line 09 and a short pause thereafter). After this short prelude, gender gets introduced into the conversation as a conscious topic.

[Figure 1 near here]
sobstvenno (-) zhenshchiny: govorit’ devushek zhurnalistok i tak actually (-) women prepare uhm female journalists and so
dalee (-) est’ spetsial’naja dazhe programma (-) podderzhki—
on (-) there is even a special programme (-) to support—
(0.6)
e::
uh:m
(0.5)
((leaning forward and nod of the head))

zhurnalistok(.) zhurnalistok;
female journalists(.) female journalists;
(0.3)
Lar h da (.). nam è: (.). u nas drugAlA problema gotovit’ parnEI zhurnalistov;
h yes (.). we uhm (.). our problem is another one to prepare male
journalists;
(0.79)
Kri h no i a khotela skazat’ chto u nas ëto: (.). ë sobstvenno: vo glave
h but what I wanted to say is that here we have it that uhm actually at
the head
baspassoz stoiat’ é:;
of baspassoz are uhm;
(0.43)
muZHCIny?
men?
(0.57)
~~~~~~~~kitchen-table~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
nu mozhet byt’ prishlo vremia kogda VY (-) kak ZHENshiny (-)
well maybe the time has come for you (-) as women (-)
~~~~~~~~~~Tam~~~~~~~~~~Tam~~~~~~~~~~Tam~~~kitchen-table
mozhete po[probovat’],
to [try],
Tam
[mkhihihihi] khi h mkhi (0.33)
[mhiihihi] hi h mhi (0.33)

Having the floor, Tamara continues her utterance at normal pace now, but gets
interrupted by Kristina (lines 14 and 15), who quite energetically claims back the floor as her
upper body quickly leans forwards towards Tamara from its previously reclined position on
the chair (the line above the transcribed word marks the trajectory of a gesture). One may
see in this movement of the upper body a pragmatic gesture, if gesture is understood as “a
label for actions that have the features of manifest deliberate expressiveness” (Kendon 2004,
15). Pragmatic gestures (ibid., 158) can have different functions, but in the given situation it
is remarkable how the movement of the body is so closely coupled with the spoken word in
organizing turn-taking. The upper body’s gesture is totally in tune with the utterance of the
words ‘ë khochu skazat’ , in itself a claim to the floor, i.e., enacting the principle ‘only one
speaker at a time' (Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson 1974, 700). While there is overlapping talk, this pragmatic body gesture helps Kristina to organize the interactional territory to her benefit. Tamara's speech audibly slows down when she notices this gesture and her half-hearted attempt to keep the floor fails (during the overlapping talk she initially speaks louder, but then raises her left fist to the mouth as if refraining from speech). Kristina then initiates a topic change (lines 15 to 17), as a result of which gender becomes a relevant topic for all participants.

In view of the vernacularization of gender discourse, it is interesting to see that the topic gets introduced with a reference to the West ('zapad'). This reference is linked to expert knowledge, which, in this situation, can be defined simply in terms of an asymmetrical distribution of knowledge. Knowledge differentials are typical for institutional talk throughout various workplace contexts (Heritage and Cleyman 2010), for example, usually doctors know something their patients do not, teachers know something their students do not, and development consultants know something their ‘target groups’ do not. Of course, the fact of knowing something or having knowledge of something is achieved in social interaction: people do and say certain things to enact expertise, while others do and say certain things that ascribe expertise and acknowledge an expert's status (Carr 2010). Kristina's utterance can be seen as constitutive of establishing herself as an expert in the given institutional environment. If for her it is worthwhile telling Larissa and Tamara about specialized departments for female journalists in the West, this also implies that, from her perspective, she is providing some new information.

Kristina's talk from line 15 to 36 could roughly be described as 'doing Gender'. By deliberately putting capital 'G' we distinguish 'doing Gender' from 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman 1987), although the former is based on the later. However, for our present purposes we want to suggest that there is a difference between the two. In order to elaborate on this, let us suggest a simple thought experiment: consider whether it is possible to imagine that, all other things being equal, Kristina could address her talk (lines 15 to 35) to two men instead of the two women in front of her? Hardly. But why is that? An answer can be found in studies of the 'doing gender' approach (Garfinkel 1967, chap. 5; West and Zimmerman 1987). In a nutshell, this research tradition has shown that there are certain historically and culturally variable techniques of seeing someone gendered, on the one hand, and performing gender, that is, interactively producing and accomplishing membership in one sex-category, on the other hand. Note that this does not imply that actors are free to see or perform gender at their will. Much of what one does and perceives is grounded in habituated gendered practices and common-sense gender knowledge, both of which are mostly unconscious and taken for granted. What Kristina says makes perfect sense in the given situation, because 'doing gender' works as usual – and it works as a constitutive pillar for bringing in expert gender knowledge, that is, 'doing Gender'. Alternatively one can think of the difference between communicating gender (what we ordinarily do without even paying attention to it) and communicating about gender (gender as a conscious topic of talk). As a woman herself, Kristina talks to women who themselves constantly reassure there 'being a woman' in naturalized ways. One may assume that the ordinary functioning of gender reification is often a prerequisite for dealing with expert gender issues as conversational topics.

Kristina, likewise, uses several techniques in order to mark the students’ gender in her account of journalistic education in the West. At line 24, she initially utters the word 'journalists' ('zhurnalistok', GEN.) without emphasis. After a micro-pause she repeats it, now
with emphasis on the last syllable, which in Russian, as a rule, determines the grammatical gender of a noun. The repeated utterance of the word ‘zhurnalistOK’ is accompanied by a gesture of the upper body, which resembles the one mentioned earlier. Kristina also slightly nods her head, concurrent with the spoken emphasis on the word's last syllable. In this case, these gestures' function is not so much relevant for the turn-taking organization, but emphasizes the grammatical gender of the word. The emphasis is consequential in pragmatic terms, as apparent at line 26, where Larissa displays her understanding of Kristina's foregone account and uses a formally similar technique in her reformulation: ‘parnEl zhurnalistov’ (GEN.) includes the linguistically unmarked form of the Russian word for ‘journalists’, so that Larissa has to add the word paren’ (young man) in order to put a contrasting emphasis on the journalist students' gender. Both utterances are examples for (linguistically derived) techniques of 'doing gender'.

Larissa obviously displays a different understanding of the gender issue at stake than Kristina wanted to convey. Interestingly, she links her different framing of the problem with a politico-geographical contrast as well. In contrast to the imagined West, their local problem (‘u nas drugAlA problema’) is a different one, for, according to her, in Kazakhstan there are enough female journalists working in the mass media sector. Their problem is rather a lack of male graduates. Larissa smiles during this turn and immediately after the utterance of the word ‘problema’ her smile intensifies. Thereafter, her gaze briefly moves to Tamara and then back to Kristina while uttering the word ‘parnEl’. This glimpse at Tamara can be seen as soliciting affirmation of what she says. The two are experts themselves, though as journalists their field of expertise is naturally a different one than Kristina's. Larissa's smile is well meaning but also displays knowledge distinction and maybe even Kristina's ignorance regarding their own sphere of expertise: Larissa's view on the gender issue is grounded in another kind of expert knowledge, knowledge that makes her and Tamara themselves experts in front of Kristina.

After Larissa defined the problem in demographic terms, Kristina makes another try at formulating the issue in terms of 'women’s empowerment' (lines 29 to 36). She refers to the fact that the local NGO Baspasoz, an established organization already working in the sphere of journalistic training and education, is headed by men. Her understanding of the issue is a more political one, for she suggests that despite women's demographical representation in Kazakhstan’s mass media sector, important (senior-) positions are occupied by men, something that could possibly be changed by initiatives from women like Tamara and Larissa. What is at stake for her is not only 'demographic balance', but the gender order as such. Kristina’s utterances from line 29 to 36 seem very deliberate while at the same time hesitant (for example, see the long pauses, lines 31 and 33), even somewhat unconfident. Underlying her utterance is a certain 'moral stance' (Goodwin 2007, 65) that expresses aspects of her world-view. The transcript from line 34 to 35 depicts her gaze movement in a simplified manner: ‘PERSON/OBJECT’ indicates that she is looking at one of the participants or an object of the environment; ‘~’ lines show for how long she is looking at an indicated position. Thus, line 34 shows that after a long pause and the word ‘nu’, Kristina initially looks at the kitchen-table. Concurrent with the utterance of the word ‘poprobovat’ (line 35), she raises her head and her gaze moves to Tamara, soliciting Tamara's reply. By the time Tamara notices Kristina's gaze, she starts laughing. Her laughter displays an affective stance (Goodwin 2007, 71) that builds up a contrast with Kristina's moral stance (Larissa only slightly smiles after she has noticed Tamara's incipient laughter).

It seems difficult to make indubitable sense of what laughter accomplishes in this
situation. Is Tamara simply laughing, because what Kristina said sounded funny to her? This is a possible interpretation, not only from the analyst's but also from the participants' point of view. One could also suggest that laughter reframes the given situation – it adds a comic tinge to serious words. A third tentative interpretation builds on considerations about compliments by Anita Pomerantz (1978): agreements with compliments run (at least in many societies) counter to restrictions on self-praise, with the result that recipients of compliments often use techniques like counter-compliments or self-degradation in order to respond appropriately. What Kristina says from line 29 to 36 somewhat resembles a compliment, as her account estimates the two journalists' societal significance quite generously. It positions them in a vision of socio-political changes, that is, in a specific development vision, which does not necessarily coincide with Tamara's self-perception. This establishes certain expectations. Laughter, then, can be seen as a device for handling such kind of incongruity insofar as it diminishes expectations. For the conversation analyst it is not of necessity to definitely opt for one of these interpretations, for talk and interaction is often ambiguous for the conversation's participants as well.

Seemingly undeterred by Tamara’s laughter, Kristina appends her account on women's empowerment as follows.

37 Kri i eshe raz povtoraiu konechno nikakoii konkurentsi ne nuzhno
and once more I repeat that of course there is no competition you
would have
38 boiat'sia nu chto zh;
to fear so what;
39 (0.45)
40 a: mogut sily sdat' a mozhet ubezhdennost' kak govornit'sia
and forces or commitment may as they say
41 poshatnut'sia (.). h a: v liubom sluchae kak pilotnyi proekt
fail you but either way as a pilot project
42 poprobovat' zapustit' pochemu by net?
to try to start it why not?
43 (0.66)
44 Tam h togda mne kazhetsia chto nado nachat' s tovo chto ty
h then I think that we need to start with you
45 prozondirui pochvu (.). gotovy li oni eto delo finansirovat',
clarifying the situation are they ready to finance that thing,

The utterances from line 37 to 43 convey quite the same moral stance as before and even add some pathos (lines 40 to 41) to Kristina’s account. As a vernacularizer of gender discourses, she encourages the two journalists to partake in a specific development vision. This vision may not be rooted in any clearly defined geographic region. However, our analysis suggests that ‘the West’ can be used as an imagined geographic other for purposes of pointing out development options. Finally, Tamara's turn at line 44 and 45 reaffirms Kristina's status as a development expert and displays Tamara's own – somewhat detached – attitude towards Kristina's development vision.
A dispute at the workshop

Four days after the conversation analysed above had taken place, Tamara conducted the last session of the six-day training. At that time the following transcribed event happened. The workshop participants were busy working on a short story by a Russian novel writer. Their task was to rewrite the beginning of the story from their own perspective. Tamara had formulated a first sentence setting the writer’s gender masculine. When one of the students asked why it was masculine, gender appeared as a topic once more. At the time the student is asking, Kristina (only partly visible on the video) enters the room and takes a seat to the left of Tamara. After Tamara’s brief answer, Kristina also starts formulating a question on the same topic. She says that from her point of view the question of the writer’s gender in the story to be rewritten has much to do with personal identity and must not be put aside as a formal issue. Before Kristina succeeds in closing her formulation, Tamara starts a reply.

As the following lines of transcript show, the two started a dispute thereafter. In view of our interest in vernacularizations of gender discourses, it will be instructive to elucidate the two women’s argumentation structure, as their dispute links up with the foregone talk at the kitchen-table about women’s empowerment.

[Figure 2 near here]
At line 72 Tamara formulates an explanation to Kristina's question. At this time, Tamara's utterance is neither heard as argument nor argumentation. For two reasons, however, the next lines are consequential for the situational definition of the involved speech act as 'arguing' or 'doing argumentation':

Firstly, the matter of dispute (quaestio Q) is defined at line 74 and is based on the foregone utterance (line 72), which thereby gets post hoc constituted as a premise (P1). The inference rule (IR1) for concluding Q from P1 is not explicitly stated here. Tamara, perhaps, can rely on common-sense background knowledge about a topos of cause and effect (for example, 'media consumption determines consciousness / mind'). This stands to reason, because though Kristina's own argumentation runs counter to Tamara's premises and conclusion, one may assume that it is itself based on the same inference rule. Moreover, Tamara's gesture (line 74) can be seen as a gesture of 'ceiving' or 'ception', terms used by Jürgen Streeck in order to describe 'a bodily form of conceiving, i.e., of conceptually structuring content to be articulated in speech' (2009, 9). Before the onset of this gesture, Tamara's folded hands rest on the desk in front of her. Concurrent with the word 'éto', she opens her hands (palms facing up), raises them to approximately the height of her shoulders (gaze focused on palms, see Figure 2), where the hands perform a slight circle movement backwards on the vector between hands and face before returning to their home position. Certainly, this gesture must be seen as pointing to a mind / consciousness that common-sense locates in the head. And, indeed, her gesture prepares the ground for uttering the word 'sosnanii' (in the mind / consciousness). But it is also interesting to look at the conceptual work being done by this gesture: rather than depicting a concept for 'domination', it visually ceives an unspoken inference rule (IR1) and depicts the 'incorporation' of male mass media as a process within the topos of cause and effect. When Tamara is initially addressing mainly the students, her gaze moves only very briefly, concurrent with the utterance of 'v osnovnom', to Kristina. Then, on the last syllable of the word 'dominiruet' (line 74), her gaze abruptly turns back to Kristina and remains in this position for quite some time (on the first utterance of 'krome tovo', at line 78, it turns back to the students).

Secondly, this solicits a reply from Kristina, and, indeed, at line 75 Kristina expresses disagreement with Tamara's account and starts a dispute. Thus, Kristina acknowledges the quaestio as a legitimate topic for discussion, but questions its validity. She provides a partly implicit argumentation for her own position (lines 77 to 81), according to which the post-
Soviet press is not made of only men (P2) and, what needs to be inferred, female journalists’ consciousness is therefore not dominated by a purely ‘male press’.

This is the place where another negotiation over the floor takes places between Tamara and Kristina. Both are in a very agitated mood now, speaking loud and fast, while both of them are smiling. During this dispute, their stance towards each other is rather one of affect, not of cooperation. Several times Tamara tries to amend her argument but is unable to get through. Only when the door bell starts ringing and Kristina is forced to stand up and leave the room, Tamara proceeds in a calm mood (line 87).

Even though Kristina has left the room and is therefore outside the realm of Tamara’s perception, Tamara continues her line of argumentation, which was initially addressed to Kristina, but is now obviously addressing the students. By linking the utterance at line 87 to her earlier utterances (lines 78, 80, 82, 83), she recycles these and introduces a third premise (P3), namely that ‘there are trainings for female journalists’. If one looks at her word choice, one notices that hers is a reformulation of Kristina’s earlier (kitchen-table talk) account: while Kristina was speaking about ‘specialized departments’ and a ‘special programme’ in the West, Tamara now speaks about ‘trainings’ that she implicitly locates in the Kazakhstani context. Thus, Tamara’s appropriation of Kristina’s account on female journalists in an imagined West also reflects the institutional environment within which vernacularizations of gender discourse take place here.

Further, from P3 Tamara derives the conclusion that certain people suppose ‘our head has some kind of deficiencies’. If one was to reconstruct the relevant background assumptions, a more formal version of her argumentation would read as something like this:

**Premise 3a**: There are trainings for female journalists (explicit).

**Premise 3b**: According to certain people, these trainings’ purpose is to liberate the mind of female journalists and correct deficiencies (implicit).

**Premise 3c**: We are female journalists (implicit)

**Conclusion**: Certain people suppose that our minds suffer from certain deficiencies / are in need of liberation.

As already mentioned, Tamara’s utterances at line 87 and 89 are conveyed in a normal, serious mood and she takes a rather cooperative stance towards the students. Her gaze moves alternately from the students to her left to the students to her right. At line 91, however, her stance is quite affective here. Gesture, the utterance’s prosody, smiling and laughter indicate irony and / or joy. While she is uttering the words ‘nasha golova’ (‘our HEAD’), her gaze turns to one of the students to her left and then holds this position over a short pause, during which the student starts smiling and chuckling. Thereafter, Tamara turns her gaze briefly back to one of the students to her right and subsequently performs an eye-rolling gesture concurrent with uttering ‘obladaet kakimi’ (‘has some’). Finally, she directs her gaze down to the desk in front of her, starts laughing, and then turns to the student sitting next to her right, who replies with a slight smile. By framing the conclusion in this affective
stance, she also distances herself (her self) from the position she represents in the argumentation. Especially eye-rolling and laughter make vivid that Tamara is more than sceptic regarding the argument’s validity. But here her interactional moves are in no way incoherent, for P3 and C were framed as a *tu quoque* argument, i.e., it was harnessed not as a fully fledged and central argument, but in order to point out a presumed inconsistency in Kristina’s argumentation.

**Concluding remarks**

By presenting an analysis of two related events, we gave an example of how the translocal production of gender knowledge and negotiating development can be studied procedurally and in detail. Focusing on vernacularizations of gender discourse at a workplace setting in Kazakhstan, we tried to break up one quite abstract concept of globalization theory by way of confronting it with rigorous empirical research. We looked at forms of knowledge as outcomes of social situations and events; they get enacted in social interaction through the participants’ doings and sayings. Likewise, we analysed development and gender expertise in terms of its enactment in interaction. While expertise is much about defining the relationship between experts and lay persons (Carr 2010, 22), our analysis also revealed that one cannot assume about development / gender expert knowledge to continuously define a situation in asymmetrical terms: the ordinary non-expert others might turn out to be experts in their own (local) field, so that the development and gender expert gets defined as a lay person herself. If neither expert nor lay knowledge is a given, independent of situational contingencies, this has certain consequences for our understanding of the asymmetries of knowledge and power in the field of development. As our analysis suggests, discourses about gender do not simply spread through the relays of international development organizations in an uncontested manner, but are apt to encounter resistance. For example, when confronted with specific developmental ideas about women’s empowerment and gender equality, national intellectuals like Tamara may scent an attitude of neo-imperialism. Their acts of contestation are not always conspicuous, but detailed studies of interaction may help to reveal them.

If we were to look at the analysed events in the frame of the six-day workshop on the whole, we would find out that there is a pervading antagonism between Tamara and Kristina on the conversational level: for example, it seems that irony is a frequently used strategy of Tamara and serves her to counter Kristina’s attempts to frame situations in terms of expert and lay knowledge. As we have shown, irony and laughter may be convenient tools for reframing a situation, for example, they have the potential to rebuff another’s claims to expert position. In this sense, the situationally appropriate enactment of development knowledge as well as gender and local expert knowledge can be conceived of in terms of conversational strategies within the wider framework of negotiating social relations and positions in the development milieu.
Basic transcription conventions (based on Selting et al. 2010)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>audible inhalation</td>
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<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>overlapping or simultaneous talk</td>
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<tr>
<td>(.)</td>
<td>micropause, less than approx. 0.2 of a second</td>
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<td>(-)</td>
<td>short pause</td>
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<td>(--)</td>
<td>medium pause</td>
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<td>(---)</td>
<td>long pause</td>
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<td>(x)</td>
<td>pause for x seconds</td>
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<td>( )</td>
<td>prolongation of the preceding sound</td>
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<td>comments</td>
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<td>zhurnalisTOK</td>
<td>indicated stress or emphasis</td>
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<td>?</td>
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<td>,</td>
<td>rising intonation (medium)</td>
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<td>falling intonation (low)</td>
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<td>=</td>
<td>even intonation</td>
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Acknowledgements

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Notes
1 The research for this article was conducted by a cross-cultural and cross-gender team.
2 They refer to the Latin root *auditio* and stress 'the act of carefully listening yet maintaining the distance between utterer and hearer' (Meyer and Schareika 2009a, 2).
3 The names of all participants and organizations are pseudonyms.
4 As for one of the authors' and the recording devices' possible effects on what and how it was said, we agree with Speer and Hutchby (2003) who suggest that this question itself must be made a topic for analysis. At least with regard to the interactions covered in this article, we could not find indications of a 'researcher effect'. In view of the conversation on the whole, there were moments when the researcher was addressed by the participants. An analysis of such instances would give us a better understanding of the researchers’ positioning in the field, though given the limited space of this article we cannot provide for it here. As for the “enduring warning to male ethnographers that they are better off studying men’s worlds” (Berliner and Falen 2008, p. 135), compare the discussion in the Special Section Men Doing Anthropology of Women in the journal *Men and Masculinities* (2008, vol. 11).
5 In both cases the spoken language is Russian. The transcription method in this article follows Selting et al. (2010) and, with regard to gestures, Streeck (2009, p. 213).
6 The transcript depicts only a small sample of observable gestures.
7 See Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) for an overview on turn-taking.
8 Kendon (2004, p. 159) speaks of the ‘parsing function’ of such gestures.
References


Figure 1. Talking at the kitchen-table: Kristina, Larissa, the researcher, Tamara (from left to right)

Figure 2. Tamara (in the middle) performing incorporation gesture during argumentation