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## I. COLOMBIA

# Mapping the Global Cold War: the unfolding of *Brot für die Welt* project no. 2746 in Colombia, 1977-1984

by

MARKUS BUDERATH, VERA DICKHOFF  
AND CARL MAGNUS MICHEL

## ABSTRACT

With this article, we set out to make a case for a novel analytical approach to understanding Cold War phenomena, through linking Odd Arne Westad's Global Cold War thesis with Saskia Sassen's understanding of assemblages. In 1976, the West German Christian aid organization Brot für die Welt received a request for funding for the Colombian organization Encuentro/Dimensión Educativa and its work in liberating evangelism and popular education. This article sets off from Brot für die Welt's project no. 2764 to pursue an analysis of the project's unfolding at the local level, attempting to map one aspect of the era increasingly known as the Global Cold War. The work is based on archived materials, related to project no. 2764 and located in Berlin, and treats the project as an assemblage as the basis of the analysis. Specifically, this article puts forward the idea that the Cold War at large can be seen as an assemblage from a macro-analytical viewpoint, and that the project no. 2764 is an example of a constituent assemblage that is partially global in both the terms of its transactions and in the character of its content. Local actors, global actors and the superstructure of the Cold War all influence, or interact with, both of these aspects and therefore warrant a structural analysis.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Markus Buderath, Vera Dickhoff and Carl Magnus Michel are currently all in the process of obtaining their master's degree in Latin American studies at the Free University of Berlin.

Having a background in interdisciplinary political and social sciences and a degree from Sciences Po Paris, Carl has recently been focusing on diaspora and cultural studies in the British context. Vera previously studied politics and law and currently focuses on renewable energy development and environmental peacebuilding in Colombia. Markus, holding a master's degree in conflict studies, has prior experience in researching assemblages and actor-relationships surrounding police reform efforts in the context of the Mexican drug war.

## INTRODUCTION

This study proposes that the Cold War in Latin America, and elsewhere, was characterized by complex actor-relationships that challenge the core/periphery and local/global dichotomies in which Cold War politics are often framed. That is to say, rather than a “contest between two military superpowers over military power and strategic control,”<sup>1</sup> the Cold War was in fact a global entanglement of contestations, negotiations and assemblages of a large number of local, national, supranational, public, private and religious actors. Odd Arne Westad, who pioneered the term Global Cold War in his 2006 volume of the same title, claims that “the most important aspects of the Cold War were neither military nor strategic, nor Europe-centered, but connected to political and social *development* in the Third World,”<sup>2</sup> even going so far as to argue that the modern notion of the “Third World” was itself a product of the Global Cold War.<sup>3</sup> The so-called liberation theology, seen as one manifestation of this sociopolitical development, shall be the focal point of this study. Specifically, this article argues that the development efforts of the German protestant

organization Brot für die Welt (BfdW) in Bogotá, Colombia, from 1977 to 1984, which aimed to influence liberation theology movements in the region, were largely shaped by the *interactions* of local and global actors, thus forming an assemblage that fits within the parameters of the Global Cold War argument.

To this end, we are interested in the notion of project aid (*Projekthilfe*) as a specific form of development aid.<sup>4</sup> Social development rather than industrial advancement should facilitate the lens through which we analyze the unfolding process of BfdW project no. 2764. The project first set up in 1977 with the stated objective of providing Colombian youth with an informal education built around the notion of liberating evangelism (*befreiende Evangelisation*). Notably, the idea that “Christianity should accept a political commitment in favor of social change”<sup>5</sup> became increasingly popular among (Catholic) Latin American churches in the 1970s; meanwhile in Germany, BfdW, originally constituted as a one-time donor event on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1959 in Berlin, increasingly saw itself subjected to the so-called Third World Movement (*Dritte Welt Bewegung*) and was debating what

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- 1 Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World interventions and the making of our times* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 396.
  - 2 Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 396. Emphasis added.
  - 3 Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 403.

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- 4 Dieter Nohlen, *Lexikon Dritte Welt* (Baden-Baden: Signal Verlag Frevert, 1980), 296.
  - 5 *Encyclopedia of Global Religion*, s.v. “Liberation Theology,” by Malik Tahar Chaouch, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412997898.n413>

role the Church ought to play in the context of the Global Cold War.<sup>6</sup>

While the organization's name and its 1959 slogan "People are hungry for bread! Anyone who tries to ignore it, is sinning [*Menschen hungern nach Brot! Wer darüber hinwegzusehen versucht, versündigt sich*]"<sup>7</sup> suggest a primary focus on food security, from the mid-1960s BfdW established goals and other fields of action that went beyond that, including education, health, human rights and gender equality. They described their work as aspiring to support all poor and marginalized people, regardless of their religion and religious denomination.<sup>8</sup> With this new focus on project aid, and Latin America as one region on which the organization would focus, "contacts had now also been made with socially committed Christian groups and ecumenical movements that asked for help for another form of social work: the trend was 'away from the institutions—towards programs with a high degree of personal and shared responsibility of the target group.' No schools, but non-formal

educational programs (*educación popular*)."<sup>9</sup> This rather drastic change in the organization's strategy and ambitions sets the backdrop against which we decided to focus on project no. 2746. The fact that BfdW, as a protestant institution, was going to work with a Catholic organization and, by doing so, promote Paulo Freire's highly contested educational methods<sup>10</sup>, further made for an interesting case of inquiry.

To this end, this article intends to carefully examine the unfolding process of BfdW project no. 2746; specifically, this research is concerned with the interactions and possible contestations between the involved actors, as well as the goals, ambitions and justifications of the relevant project partners. By focusing on the relationships and means of engagement of the respective actors, we aim to illustrate and contextualize the ways in which BfdW's project efforts in 1970s Colombia meant that "localized actors and struggles [were] constitutive of new types of

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6 Nuscheler, 1993 in Claudia Olejniczak, *Die Dritte-Welt-Bewegung in Deutschland: konzeptionelle und organisatorische Strukturmerkmale einer neuen sozialen Bewegung*, (Wiesbaden: DUV, Dt. Univ.-Verlag, 1998), 76.

7 "Die Geschichte von Brot für die Welt," Brot für die Welt, accessed January 22, 2020 <https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/ueber-uns/chronik/>

8 "Die Geschichte von Brot für die Welt," Brot für die Welt.

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9 Hahn, n. d. in Wilfried Veeseer. „Brot Für Die Welt“ - Quo Vadis?: Eine Kritische Untersuchung; Unterstützt das Evangelische Hilfswerk Revolutionäre Befreiungsideologien? (Wetzlar: Deutsche Evangelische Allianz, Informationsdienst Dokumentation 1985), 37, DS 5.

10 *Educación popular* is a critical pedagogical approach that links education to notions of class and social struggle. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, with his 1968 publication *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is often seen as one of the main pioneers of this concept.

global politics and subjectivities,”<sup>11</sup> to borrow from Saskia Sassen’s analysis of local-global actor relationships in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By linking Westad’s Global Cold War thesis with Sassen’s thesis on local-global assemblages, this research further aims to show that the “globality” of the Cold War allowed for “cross-border institutional spaces [and] powerful imaginaries enabling aspirations to transboundary political practice even when the actors involved [were] basically localized.”<sup>12</sup> Despite these theoretical-conceptual efforts, we are not trying to make any claims as regards the universality of our argument, but merely intend to provide a micropolitical analysis of a local-global assemblage in 1970s Colombia and, therefore, to make a case as to why the Westad-Sassen conceptual approach might be useful in analyzing Cold War phenomena.

The focus on religious actors from a political rather than theological perspective is an especially interesting departure point for the mapping of local-global assemblages. Sassen’s idea of modernity, and therefore for this article the Third World as striving to attain modernity, is first and foremost linked to a disassembly of the nation state. The subnational, local and global assemblages therefore become the primary markers for the analysis of organizational

structures and processes. Talking about Oxfam, Amnesty International and Forest Watch as examples of global civil-society struggles, to which we could add BfdW, Sassen identifies the “linking together of multiple local (non-cosmopolitan) efforts and their global projection through a major organization with worldwide recognition”<sup>13</sup> as their key organizational feature. She claims that the “rise or global expansion of old and new organized religions also follows this pattern.”<sup>14</sup> In defining BfdW as constituent of an organized religion, combined with their self-conception as a global platform uniting “distant neighbors”<sup>15</sup> (localized actors) in a global “struggle,” we explore an approach to position religious actions in the Global Cold War context. The fight for popular education in Colombia can definitely be seen as a “civil-society struggle” that is global in its significance but local in its form taken on by BfdW project no. 2764. To this end, the idea of the distant neighbor (*der ferne Nächste*) is essential to what Sassen calls “powerful imaginaries”, as it provides a warrant for funding projects that includes a political undertone in supposedly apolitical organizations.

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11 Saskia Sassen, “Local Actors in Global Politics,” *Current Sociology* 52, no. 4 (July 2004): 650.

12 Sassen, “Local Actors,” 655.

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13 Saskia Sassen, “Organized Religions in Our Global Modernity (Critical Essay),” *PMLA* 126, no. 2 (2011): 456.

14 Sassen, „Organized Religions,” 456.

15 Konstanze Evangelia Kemnitzer, *Der ferne Nächste: Zum Selbstverständnis der Aktion “Brot für die Welt,”* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008), 206-207.

## BROT FÜR DIE WELT PROJECT NO. 2764

This study is concerned with BfdW project no. 2764, which carries the official title “Liberating Evangelism and Education” (*Befreiende Evangelisation und Erziehung*) and was set up in response to a request for financial support<sup>16</sup> by the Bogotá-based Colombian organization Encuentro – Investigation Services and Action for Education (*Servicio de Investigación y Acción Educativa*). Encuentro later changed its name to Dimensión Educativa, the reasons for which will be discussed in the following chapter, which is why the information and citations used in this paper may not be consistent as regards the organization’s name. In a BfdW briefing note dated October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1976<sup>17</sup> Encuentro was described as a “charitable organization, which consists of a large team of committed Christians (priests and laypersons) who have come together to live with disadvantaged members of society, and to reflect upon and preach faith in Jesus Christ as a liberating activity.” Project no. 2764 in particular aimed to provide youth groups with “tangible solutions” to the systemic issues that they were facing, and as such largely relied on literacy

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16 The details of this request and the project financing at large will be discussed in section three.

17 ADE, BfdW-P2746: BfdW project description to be discussed at meeting, 21.10.1976.

conscientization<sup>18</sup> (*bewusstseins-bildene Alphabetisierung*) to live up to the new Christian responsibility (*neue christliche Verpflichtung*) that the organization saw itself as subjected to.<sup>19</sup>

To this effect, Encuentro initially requested financial aid for three individual projects, all of which aimed to provide youth groups with literacy conscientization programs. Specifically, the projects intended to support about 50 youth groups in setting up literacy and evangelization programs, as well as community centers and activities. Cultural activities were also meant to be part of the programs. In order to train and prepare the tutors for these activities, Encuentro planned to organize nine 1-week training seminars in different parts of Colombia, in which the participants

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18 Paulo Freire considered that education, and in that sense also literacy, cannot be taught without “a concept of man and the world” (Freire 1970 in Ryan 1974: 67). To this end, Freire believed that teaching adults to read and write must include a sort of historical-materialist teaching of what they are reading and writing for. In other words, Freire believed that, through becoming literate, one can also become class-conscious and aware of one’s sociopolitical standing. For further reading on the subject matter see: John W. Ryan, “Paulo Freire, Literacy Through Conscientization,” *Literacy Discussion* (1974): <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED114790.pdf>

19 ADE, BfdW-P2746: BfdW project description to be discussed at meeting, 21.10.1976.

would be trained in such matters as group dynamics, youth psychology, faith and alphabetization. In parallel to these activities, Encuentro sought to use the project funds to launch a research and publication program, which included the publication of six magazines –entitled Encuentro– on evangelization and education efforts (*Erziehungsarbeit*).<sup>20</sup>

For all of the above, Encuentro requested a total of 72.000 Deutsche Mark, or \$US28.000.<sup>21</sup> The request was directed to BfdW through the World Council of Churches (WCC), which, as the following chapter will show, assumed an intermediary role in the negotiation process of the project financing. Prior to consulting the WCC, Encuentro had already asked the German-based Catholic organization MISEREOR, as well as the US-based Catholic Relief Service for financial aid.<sup>22</sup> By the time that the request reached the WCC and then later BfdW through the WCC, however, Encuentro had not yet received a reply from these organizations. In the initial letter that Encuentro sent the WCC on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1976 (which was later redirected to BfdW), Encuentro laid out their reasoning as to why they, as a Roman Catholic organization, would be reaching out to the WCC, a product

of the ecumenical movement and a Christian organization that the Catholic Church is not a member of.<sup>23</sup> The letter was written by Mario Peresson who, apart from being the head of Encuentro, was also a well-known Colombian theologian.<sup>24</sup> Peresson said the following about Encuentro's ecumenical ambitions:

[... The] principle and the fundamental attitude of [Encuentro] has been that of the evangelical commitment to the liberation of the oppressed, which should lead us towards ecumenical work, with all Christians who want to live and understand our faith in Jesus Christ as a historical act of liberation (*acción histórica liberadora*).<sup>25</sup>

Shortly after this correspondence, i.e. before the WCC could react to Encuentro's request, *Adveniat*<sup>26</sup>, speaking on

20 ADE, BfdW-P2746: BfdW project description...

21 ADE, BfdW-P2746: BfdW project description...

22 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to the WCC, 31.08.1976, 2.

23 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Encuentro to the WCC, 13.04.1976

24 See Juan Alberto Casas, ed., *A hombros de gigantes. Maestros de la Facultad de Teología de la Pontificia Universidad Javeriana* (Bogotá: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Facultad de Teología, 2017), 263-281, <https://kaired.org.co/archivo/3756>.

25 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to the WCC, 31.08.1976, 2.

26 *Adveniat*: "pastoral help for Latin America, est. 1961 in Essen, Germany; support of the (Catholic) Church in Latin America and its pastoral projects through financial aid[...]" in Nohlen,

behalf of *MISEREOR*<sup>27</sup>, responded to Encuentro's letter from August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1976 and explained that they would not be able to support the project in question due to its "orientation"<sup>28</sup>. Specifically, the letter states that Encuentro had requested help for a similar project in the past, which Adveniat had declined to support, and which was eventually shut down by the respective ecclesiastical authority in Colombia (*Jerarquía Eclesiástica Colombiana*). The letter goes on to state that this prior project did not have the support of either the Archbishop of Bogota, Cardinal Anibal Muñoz Duque, or the president of the Colombian Episcopal Conference (*Conferencia Episcopal de Colombia*), and since the current project that Encuentro were seeking support for had not changed much in character, Adveniat would not be able to support it either. These negotiation processes are illustrative of the complex relationships that were at play in the context of global aid assemblage P2746. Organizational conflicts and relationships, as well as personal ones, all influenced the unfolding process of BfdW project no. 2746 (see figure 1). As chapter four will show, the conflict with the

Catholic Church, albeit an expected consequence given the positioning of the Vatican in Cold War politics, was a particular burden to the project in question.

Given Adveniat's reaction, Encuentro convened with the consulting agency *Proyectos – Special Development Study Group* to revise Encuentro's financing plan. *Proyectos* then sent both the new financing plan and an evaluation of Encuentro to the WCC on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1977. Importantly, the financing plan was designed in such a way as to make sure that "each project would be financed by a different donor agency" and, as specified in the letter accompanying the plan, that "[the WCC could] change projects to another donor agency and vice versa, but this [was now] laid into [the WCC's] hands." In the context of this arrangement, BfdW would contribute US\$37.040 of a total of US\$144.040, the remaining sum of which was divided among the following other organizations: Cebemo (US\$64.500); Entraide et Fraternité (US\$14.000); Adventsaktie (US\$9.500), HEKS (US\$9.000); Vastenaktie (US\$10.000).<sup>29</sup>

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"Lexikon Dritte Welt", 10.

27 MISEREOR: "Episcopal Aid organization, est. 1958 in Aachen, Germany; Christian development work in education and health; foreign and missionary programs through Adveniat;" in Nohlen, "Lexikon Dritte Welt", 247.

28 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Adveniat to Mario Peresson, 07.05.1976.

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29 CEBEMO: Central agency for joint financing development programs; Dutch agency based in Den Haag, the Netherlands. See ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter CEBEMO to BfdW, 07.06.1977; Entraide et Fraternité: Belgian Catholic development organization founded in 1961. Entraide et Fraternité, "Présentation," accessed 29 March 2020, <https://www.entraide.be/-Entraide-et->

In other words, BfdW was only responsible for about 26 percent of the overall project financing. While the money that they provided still went to the activities as discussed in the previous paragraphs, the fact that they formed part of a larger donor consortium is nonetheless important when considering the arguments advanced in this article, as it goes to show that our illustration of global aid assemblage P2764 is, in a sense, incomplete. That is to say, the negotiation processes and actor-relationships that we discuss in this article only account for a share of Encuentro's overall project efforts and, as such, only illustrate part of a larger endeavor. This, however, does not render our argument void, as our interest lies not so much in the particular weight of BfdW as a donor in relation to Encuentro's other donors, but rather in the

relationships and modes of engagement between BfdW and the other relevant actors that each played their part in the unfolding processes of the project activities that they had envisioned or were responsible for.

### A GLOBALIZED ASSEMBLAGE BETWEEN LOCAL AND TRANSNATIONAL ACTORS

With this in mind, let us turn to the question of why Proyectos assumed such a central role in assessing and helping redesign Encuentro's project and why BfdW put their trust in this organization from this point onwards. The key actor in relation to Proyectos was Helmut von Loebell, a German based in Bogotá. Von Loebell worked for the Colombian government, what he called Bogotá's "high society",<sup>30</sup> and various projects in the "slums" simultaneously. By setting up Proyectos as a committee to help foreign Christian aid organizations –such as BfdW– in assessing the applications made by Colombian organizations for project funds, von Loebell vowed to review both the applicants and their projects from sociological, psychological, sociopolitical and economic viewpoints.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Proyectos

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Fraternite-; Adventsaktie: Dutch Catholic foundation, originally independent, later merged with Vastenactie. See Vastenactie, "Adventsactie, een campagne van Vastenactie," <https://www.vastenactie.nl/adventsactie>, accessed 28 March 2020; HEKS: Swiss Evangelical foundation founded in 1945. Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz, "Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen der Schweiz (HEKS)," accessed 28 March 2020, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/043179/2006-11-10/>; Vastenactie: Dutch Catholic development organization founded in 1961. See Vastenactie, *Over Vastenactie*, accessed 28 March 2020, <https://www.vastenactie.nl/over-vastenactie>.

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30 Helmut von Loebell, *Der Stehaufmann: Berlin, Bogotá, Salzburg - im Unterwegs zu Hause* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 2016), 107.

31 Loebell, *Der Stehaufmann*, 107.

aimed to only endorse projects that went beyond a purely caritative initiative, as well as to distance itself from the so-called theory of marginality.<sup>32</sup> The aim was to help projects that promoted a social conscience for such matters as inequality and exploitation. One of the main methods used to promote social conscience was *educación popular*, which was applied in the context of BfdW project 2764 too.

Whether or not the fact that von Loebell was himself German was a factor in the direct acceptance of his authority by BfdW and the WCC cannot be answered. Nevertheless, why a German middleman was used for the assessment is an interesting question within the complex web of actor-relationships at play in the unfolding of the BfdW project. To thus be able to analyze and map the local unfolding process of the BfdW project, it can be helpful to define the project in and of itself as an assemblage that involves a multitude of actors with differing levels and sometimes conflicting origins of agency in relation to the project.

Brot für die Welt, although a major point of focus for the analysis of the project and an important actor in many ways, had limited direct control over the project. Despite the decision-making power over the financing of the project (activities), BfdW was only one of multiple donors in the constellation and thus the project did not entirely depend

on the allocated funds. Furthermore, the participation and nature of the role BfdW took in Encuentro's work was largely facilitated and enabled by the intermediary actor WCC.

The WCC, although neither actively participating in the project unfolding in Colombia nor the decision-making processes in West Germany, assumed an important, albeit passive, role. As such, the assemblage only functions with the participation of the WCC. However, as opposed to most other actors in this assemblage, the WCC gains its agency exclusively through the structural position it inhabits. That is to say, it is not so much the human interactions within the organization, with all their potentially conflicting views and ambitions, but the structural importance of the organization itself (as a facilitator) that matters in the context of the global aid assemblage P2746. The structure of the assemblage and the interactions between its actors are illustrated in fig. 1

Helmut von Loebell and Proyectos occupy positions as transnational actors linking the global organizations based in Europe to the local actors in Colombia. They seemingly possess a bifold agency, through von Loebell himself, within the relationship surrounding BfdW project no. 2764 – on the one hand being local actors helping and working for the cause of Encuentro's struggle to continue their work and obtain funding, and on the other hand working as trustworthy international actors to legitimize the

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32 Loebell, *Der Stehaufmann*, 107.

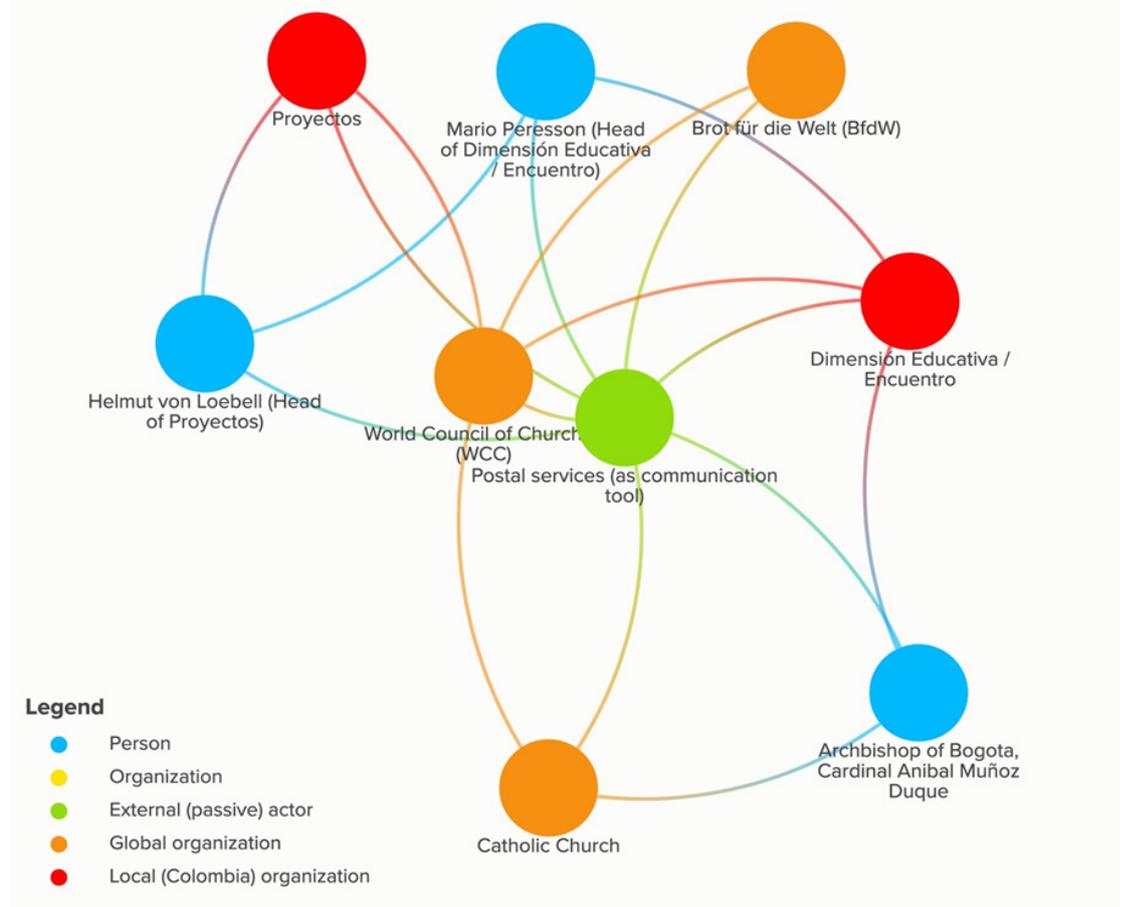


FIGURE 1 shows the relationships between the actors in the “global aid assemblage P2746.” We differentiate between organizations and persons as active actors, and have identified one passive actor, i.e. the postal services. Graphic created with Kumu relationship mapping software. (Kumu, Kumu relationship mapping software (Kumu, 2020), <https://kumu.io> (accessed April 3, 2020)).

organization before the possible donors. Important for understanding the relevance of the global aid assemblage at work in BfdW project no. 2764 is how the context of the Global Cold War introduces new actors to the construct, thus supporting the ontological assumption of assemblage theory, which is essentially one that holds that the world operates in assemblages, the number of which is potentially infinite, and the number of actors within each assemblage is potentially infinite as well. From a macro-analytical perspective then, the Global Cold War is an assemblage in itself, composed of micro-assemblages with a local-global character. The following chapters serve the purpose of illustrating and mapping one of these constituent assemblages.

## TENSIONS WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

As to the evaluation of Encuentro by Proyectos, it is first necessary to highlight why and how Encuentro decided to change their name to *Dimensión Educativa*. Throughout the letter dated April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1977 Proyectos mentions “problems” with the Colombian Catholic hierarchy and diminished support by clerical groups.<sup>33</sup> These problems stemmed primarily from ecclesiastical

<sup>33</sup> ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Proyectos to project partners, 1 April 1977, 5-6

repression of various projects across Colombia through Archbishop Muñoz Duque of Bogotá who, having hosted Pope Paul VI on the first papal visit to Latin America, strategically aligned himself with the Second Vatican Council.<sup>34</sup> Liberation theology and the educational methods of Paulo Freire, which were to be employed in the projects developed by Encuentro, were deemed too radical and politicized by the Catholic authorities.<sup>35</sup> Seeing as some catholic aid organizations had already refused support on the grounds of not being able to work without authorization from the country's highest catholic authority, changing the group's name and its function (and leadership) from Christian to secular was deemed a necessary and useful step by Proyectos.<sup>36</sup>

In a document attached to the letter and marked "part of the report of utmost confidentiality",

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34 See "Paul VI," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199659623.001.0001/acref-9780199659623-e-4393>; "Vatican Council, Second," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199659623.001.0001/acref-9780199659623-e-6009>; and Casas, *A hombros de gigantes. Maestros de la Facultad de Teología de la Pontificia Universidad Javeriana*, 263-281.

35 Casas, *A hombros de gigantes*, 263-281.

36 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Proyectos to project partners, 1 April 1977, 8-9

Proyectos mentions that the project had in fact already been shut down by Cardinal Muñoz Duque along with papal authorities in Rome and had to be continued as clandestine activity alongside regular clerical work.<sup>37</sup> Therefore the new registered name *Dimensión Educativa* and the installation of secular educators as responsible parties would serve the purpose of erasing all links with the religious congregations and evasion of control through the papal authorities. The report nonetheless ensures the clerical educators' paramount pledge to "Christ personified in the marginalized and exploited poor"<sup>38</sup> as proof of their religious commitment in the unfolding of the projects.

The traditionally local and politically informal nature of *Dimensión Educativa* and its projects lies in stark contrast to the global network of the Catholic church and its role as a Cold War actor. The Catholic Church had for a long time found itself in a "[pre-existing] competition with Marxist socialism over answers to the social question"<sup>39</sup>. The role that the Church and its bishops across the world occupied was not one of mere "anti-communism", but rather a "progressive pastoral

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37 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Proyectos to project partners, 1 April 1977, 11.

38 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Proyectos to project partners, 1 April 1977, 11.

39 Piotr H. Kosicki, "The Catholic Church and the Cold War," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War*, ed. Craig Daigle, (London: Routledge, 2014), 260.

reorientation away from Europe and the United States and towards the decolonizing Third World.”<sup>40</sup> Through the three most important Cold War popes,<sup>41</sup> the Catholic Church defined “Catholicism’s international advocacy around three pillars: the dignity of the human person, nuclear disarmament, and international development.”<sup>42</sup>

One could assume that the “guerilla” work of *Dimensión Educativa* would lie outside the sphere of the papal authority’s interests. On the contrary however, the politicization of aid-work during the Global Cold War meant that even small, resource-poor and localized actors inhabited spaces that transcended the borders that they were traditionally confined to, thus enabling what Sassen calls a “set of processes that does not necessarily scale at the global level as such, yet [...] is part of globalization”<sup>43</sup> and involves “specific localized struggles with an explicit or implicit global agenda.”<sup>44</sup> The case at hand goes to show that these processes were underway even before new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) allowed for the

formation of transnational political groupings. In her article on local actors in global politics, Sassen puts forward the argument that localized citizen-driven political practices, arguably such as those planned and undertaken by *Dimensión Educativa*, “are constituting a specific type of global politics, one that runs through localities and is not predicated on the existence of global institutions.”<sup>45</sup> According to Sassen however, “the engagement can be with global institutions [...] or with local institutions”<sup>46</sup> – in the case of the global aid assemblage P2764 this could be the WCC, the papal authorities in Rome, BfdW or the archdiocese of Bogota or, as will be shown below, the Colombian government as global and local actors respectively.

Especially John Paul II, often seen as an “anti-communist warrior”<sup>47</sup> was more motivated to “strike a balance between pursuing dialogue on behalf of human rights and drawing lines in the sand to crack down on Latin American liberation theology.”<sup>48</sup> It is therefore not surprising that, through the agency of the local actor Cardinal Muñoz Duque and the archdiocese of Bogotá, the “global player” in Rome decided to intervene in Latin America through

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40 Kosicki, “The Catholic Church and the Cold War,” 260.

41 John XIII (1958-1963); Paul VI (1963-1978); John Paul II (1978-2005).

42 Kosicki “The Catholic Church and the Cold War,” 260.

43 Saskia Sassen, “Globalization or Denationalization?,” *Review of International Political Economy* 10, no. 1 (2003): 1.

44 Sassen, “Globalization or Denationalization?,” 2.

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45 Sassen, “Local Actors in Global Politics,” 655.

46 Sassen, “Local Actors in Global Politics,” 655.

47 Kosicki, “The Catholic Church and the Cold War,” 269.

48 Kosicki, “The Catholic Church and the Cold War,” 269.

this already established network. Here the one-directional interaction from a classically non-state actor working to control its subordinated structures is a counterexample to the traditional assumption that political repression during the Cold War era stemmed mostly from state actors. Despite rising doubt surrounding the political tenability of Dimensión Educativa's projects, BfdW decided in a meeting on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1977 to finance Encuentro/Dimensión Educativa over the course of three years with a total of \$37.040, specifically for the formation of leaders for youth groups, printing and publication costs as outlined by Proyectos.<sup>49</sup> On July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1977 a contract was sent for signature to Dimensión Educativa which confirmed that the solicited sum would be paid out.<sup>50</sup>

## WORKING UNDER A REPRESSIVE STATE

On top of the difficulty of obtaining funding and the problems with the Catholic Church, Encuentro/Dimensión Educativa was increasingly facing political challenges at home. In a progress report from Dimensión Educativa dated May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1979 Peresson lists the successes of the project in 1978 and requests the second instalment

of BfdW's grant.<sup>51</sup> The remaining amount, viz. US\$17.360 of a total of US\$37.040, would be needed to complete the previously agreed upon project goals of BfdW's grant.<sup>52</sup> In his report, Peresson links a delay of the report to the current situation in Colombia:

I am a bit late in sending the report due to a delay in the realization of the projects, caused by some unforeseen events, especially due to certain repressive measures that are being mounted against all progressive forms of organization in our country. However, the work continues, although with a little more caution.<sup>53</sup>

A number of political events in Colombia serve to contextualize this extract from the 1979 report. Among them are the 1977 national civic strike during the presidency of President Alfonso López Michelsen, which resulted in 19 deaths and nearly 3,500 detainees,<sup>54</sup> as well as the so-called Security Statute in 1978,

51 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979.

52 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979, 1.

53 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979, 1.

54 Mauricio Archila-Neira, "El Paro Cívico Nacional del 14 de septiembre de 1977. Un ejercicio de memoria colectiva," *Revista de Economía Institucional* 18, no. 35 (2016): 317.

49 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Meeting BfdW, 25/26.05.1977, 2.

50 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter BfdW to Encuentro with contract, 07.06.1977.

introduced by President Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala only weeks after taking office.<sup>55</sup> Decree 1923, later known as the Security Statute, intended to stop rural and urban guerilla warfare and granted military and police forces extraordinary authority.<sup>56</sup> As summarized by Forrest Hylton, “by the late 1970s a broader urban Left was becoming visible [in Colombia], as worker, student, and guerrilla networks began to converge with new neighborhood movements on the hillsides. This coalition was met with severe repression by state forces—trade unionists, students, professors and left-wing community leaders were detained, beaten, or killed.”<sup>57</sup> As for the case at hand, this meant that Proyectos and its founder Helmut von Loebell were also subjected to the repressive measures of the Colombian state. Von Loebell and other members of the organization were detained by the Colombian military and remained in custody while being questioned on their political affiliation, the political motivation behind Proyectos and their links to various leaders

of the Colombian left.<sup>58</sup> This places the initial delay in the realization of the projects within the local political context and shows the possible dangers that arose from the organization’s approaches and partners.

A closer look at the project activities illustrates the exact destination of BfdW’s donor contributions, which were meant to cover both training seminars and a research and publication program. The training seminars included courses on literacy conscientization and popular education. The workshop locations indicate a nationwide approach to the project; specifically, seminars were held in Medellín, Bogotá, Armenia, Cali, Ibagué and Cartagena.<sup>59</sup> Participants include youths from both working-class and student backgrounds. So-called “profoundization reunions” in Bogotá attract between 14 and 54 participants, on topics such as “The capitalist state: militarism - national security” and “What are Christians for socialism?,” respectively.<sup>60</sup> The Marxist orientation of these activities was particularly problematic in the context of the Global Cold War, where even localized activities were heavily politicized out of fear that they could

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55 J. P. Osterling, *Democracy in Colombia: Clientelist Politics and Guerrilla Warfare* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1988), 105.

56 Osterling, *Democracy in Colombia*, 105.

57 Forrest Hylton, “The Cold War That Didn’t End Paramilitary Modernization in Medellín, Colombia,” in *A century of revolution: insurgent and counterinsurgent violence during Latin America’s long cold war*, ed. Greg Grandin and G. M. Joseph (Duke University Press, 2010), 346.

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58 von Loebell, “Der Stehaufmann: Berlin, Bogotá, Salzburg - im Unterwegs zu Hause,” 110-113.

59 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979, 4-5

60 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979, 7

have an impact on the politics of the wider region. As for the theorization of the events at hand, this aspect is of utmost importance, as it can be argued that it was the politics and project incentives of Dimensión Educativa that *enabled* the unfolding of the global aid assemblage P2746 in the first place. That is to say, the temporality of the events, i.e. that they took place in the context of the Global Cold War, meant an automatic widening of their spatiality, as more and more actors wanted to assert their influence on the project.

Dimensión Educativa concludes about the workshops of 1978 that the groups of workers and farmers had been more constant than those made up of students. It further calls for a removal of its youth exclusivity, even if it intends to continue as predominantly focused on youth in the future, in order to expand participation within the movement. It emphasizes the need for a stronger organization of the movement and calls for a more nuanced and intelligible theoretical approach within the groups, highlighting the importance of popular education.<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile, the organization's research and publication program numbered four publications in 1978. Besides its textbook *LUCHAREMOS: Method of liberation alphabetization*, these include titles such as *Education in Cuba: Part I and 2, Only militant*

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<sup>61</sup> ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979, 7.

*Christians can be liberation theologians*, and *Marxism and Christianity: towards a common project*.<sup>62</sup> While the publications had thus far focused on Colombia, Peresson's report includes a section on the preparation of the second edition of the book *LUCHAREMOS*, stating that the first edition "was very successful" and that "the second [edition] will be 5000 copies and [distributed] at the Latin American level," suggesting an approach expanding beyond national borders.<sup>63</sup>

Peresson's idea to remodel or adapt the project in such a way as to be more inclusive of other groups (viz. non-youth), as well as to increase the reach of the organization's publications, could very well be interpreted as dangerous to the political system in Colombia at the time and thus explains the hostile response of the Colombian state. The increasingly global, or transnational, ambitions of Dimensión Educativa itself are further interesting in light of the fact that the highly politicized nature of their work did indeed, whether intentionally or not, enhance the globality of their activities, and therefore also of the assemblage at hand.

This orientation towards liberation theology then serves to, as Sassen's says, "illuminate the

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<sup>62</sup> ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979, 8.

<sup>63</sup> ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979, 2.

distinction between a global network and the actual transactions that constitute it: the global character of a network [in our case assemblage] does not necessarily imply that its transactions are equally global, or that it all has to happen at the global level.”<sup>64</sup> Global aid assemblage P2764 is thus partially global in both the terms of its transactions and in the character of its content—local actors, global actors and the superstructure of the Cold War context all influence or interact with both of these aspects.

### [THE LACK OF] COMMUNICATION DURING THE GLOBAL COLD WAR

While the previous chapter illustrates Dimensión Educativa’s far-reaching and optimistic ambitions, the subsequent unfolding of project no. 2746 was heavily influenced by the fact that Peresson’s 1979 progress report never arrived at the responsible department, as a letter from Ilse Landsberger from BfdW’s finance department to Peresson shows. In this letter, dated December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1981, Landsberger enquires about the status of the project and asks Peresson to send her a full “operational and financial status update.”<sup>65</sup> Rather importantly, she

was inquiring whether the remaining project funds, viz. US\$17.360, were still needed. Peresson responds quickly and expresses his surprise at the receipt of Landsberger’s letter:

Actually the letter has caused me astonishment since on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1979 I sent Mr. Pinto de Carvalho both the operational report that specified the progress of the project and the financial report. [...] It seems strange that it didn’t arrive. The only reason could be the mail [service].<sup>66</sup>

In the following paragraphs of this letter, Peresson goes on to state that in the same year of 1979 he received a visit from both Daniel Leitner, BfdW’s head of operations at the time, and pastor Jesús Vieira from Proyectos, both of which he apparently informed about the progress of the project. Our examination of the archived files did not yield any results as to the precise events of this meeting, but what is obvious from the letter exchange is that there were considerable gaps or flaws in the communication between the respective actors. Even if it were true that Peresson’s initial project report from May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1979 was lost by the postal services, the question remains why Daniel Leitner

<sup>64</sup> Sassen, “Local Actors in Global Politics,” 654.

<sup>65</sup> ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Ilse Landsberger (Treasury department for Latin America, BfdW) to Mario

Peresson, 08.12.1981.

<sup>66</sup> ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Ilse Landsberger (Treasury department for Latin America, BfdW), 24.01.1982, 1.

and/or pastor Jesús Vieira did not forward the information to their BfdW counterparts in Germany.

Unfortunately, the archival materials at hand do not allow us to draw any firm conclusions as regards this matter, but the incident illustrates the inherent and inevitable flaws of the communication tools of the period. This includes the fact that letters and other types of common exchanges of the time did not nearly allow for the type of record-keeping that we know today, thus making it difficult to understand an event, or a chain of events, *ex post*. This, in turn, sometimes makes it difficult to attribute wrongdoing to any given individual. In the context of the Global Cold War, technology therefore played an important role in and of itself, going so far as to assume agency. This is true for the case at hand as well, where all of the actors that formed part of the global aid assemblage P2746 were reliant upon and thus influenced by communication technology such as landline phone technology and postal services, with a particular emphasis on the latter. As for the operationalization of our research, we therefore attributed agency to the postal services and labeled it a passive agent in the global aid assemblage P2746 as illustrated in figure 1.

Returning to the case at hand, the loss of the information meant that BfdW cancelled the second part of the funding, as is shown in BfdW's final project report from January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1984. Perhaps surprisingly, the report

goes on to mention that BfdW “never responded to Peresson’s letter from January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1982, probably because they were embarrassed by the incident.”<sup>67</sup> It was not until April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1984 that Werner Rostan, the head of BfdW’s Latin America department, sent a personal letter of apology to Mario Peresson, explaining that the finance department had received and archived Peresson’s letter from January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1984 but apparently never forwarded it to the relevant departments.<sup>68</sup> This is particularly striking in light of the fact that the finance department was headed by Daniel Leitner, who had visited Mario Peresson in 1979 and—according to Peresson—had been personally informed about the project progress.<sup>69</sup>

By no means is it our intention here to make any assumptions as to Mr. Leitner’s objectives or possible mistakes. However, the fact that Peresson’s second letter never reached the necessary departments (after the first one was allegedly lost by the postal services) becomes interesting when taking into consideration that it was Daniel Leitner who, on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1981 suggested that part of the funding originally reserved for project no. 2746, namely US\$4.953,

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67 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Project closure report P2746, 12.01.1984.

68 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Werner Rostan to Mario Peresson, 07.04.1984.

69 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Ilse Landsberger (Treasury department for Latin America, BfdW), 24.01.1982, 1.

be redirected to an unrelated youth project in Colombia.<sup>70</sup> In a separate note<sup>71</sup> that carries the same date as the former, Mr. Leitner states that BfdW does neither have a project nor a financial report and that Dimensión Educativa should be asked to send over these documents. That is to say, Mr. Leitner had already suggested the reallocation of a faction of the funding to a different project *before* Mario Peresson had a chance to react to the request that was subsequently forwarded to him by Ilse Landsberger (letter dated December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1981).

It is beyond the scope of this article to examine this any further but suffice it to say that the project unfolding was shaped by (the lack of) communication processes and tools that, as such, influenced the global aid assemblage P2746 in oftentimes unpredictable ways. This is of theoretical importance in that it underlines the fact that although the global aid assemblage P2746 may have been intentionally constructed by (a number of) certain lead actor(s), it only functions in interplay with other (possibly non-human) actors and, therefore, its mechanisms rely on forces outside of the control of the lead actor(s), for which reason its precise effects are often uncontrollable.

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70 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Note Daniel Leitner Betr.: P2764/WCC 7702, 23.11.1981.

71 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Note Daniel Leitner to H. Kunz, 23.11.1981.

## CONCLUSIONS

With this paper, we set out to make a case for a novel analytical approach to understanding Cold War phenomena. By linking Odd Arne Westad's thesis on the Global Cold War with Saskia Sassen's thesis on local-global actor relationships in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we intended to show that the *globality* of an assemblage does not necessarily depend on modern technologies such as information and communication technologies (ICTs), which, to Sassen, is a key *enabling factor* of local-global assemblages. Instead, such factors as ideology, which was obviously a driving force of action during the Cold War, also possess the capacity to generate "powerful imaginaries" that enable actors to enter "cross-border institutional spaces,"<sup>72</sup> allowing them to transcend the structural limits that they were previously confined to.

This is not to say that technology is not an important factor in the unfolding process of an assemblage, but rather that technology (or the lack thereof) does not so much limit the unfolding process of a given assemblage, but rather influence its outcome in important, but oftentimes unpredictable ways. Without a doubt, the global aid assemblage P2746 would have assumed an entirely different shape and character if the (human and organizational) actors had been able to communicate

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72 Sassen, "Local Actors in Global Politics," 655.

through such mediums as email or instant messaging. The fact that the respective actors did not have access to these possibilities, however, did not necessarily limit the unfolding of the assemblage, but perhaps even increased its politicization, thus facilitating its unfolding process in the sense that more actors wanted to become involved. In a sense, it seems, that the slow means of communication available to the actors at the time meant that they had limited access to up-to-date information and occasionally had to make assumptions about the actions or objectives of their counterparts. This “acting based on assumptions” is perhaps illustrative of the Global Cold War as a whole, and certainly in the case of global aid assemblage P2746.

It is for these reasons that we trust that the Westad/Sassen analytical approach is a useful point of departure for assessing and identifying local-global assemblages in the context of the Global Cold War. As for the assemblage that we have identified, however, we must concede that we have merely charted a fraction of it, for the scope limitations of this research meant that we only accessed one archive, namely that of Brot für die Welt. That is to say, to fully understand the interactions between the various actors, as well as the intentions of the actors themselves, one would have to consult a greater variety of sources. Even then, there is no guarantee that one would have sufficient material at hand to fully map the assemblage.

Nonetheless, it would probably be possible to paint a more accurate picture of what had happened here. Finally, therefore, we can only hope that we have inspired someone to do exactly that.