Abstract

The thesis focuses on the relations and complex interplay between forms of resistance and governmental practice. It takes as its starting point the questions, ‘how do forms of resistance impact upon the government of the state?’, and ‘how does the government of the state impact upon forms of resistance?’ In this respect, the thesis sets out the results of a research project that moves from a set of abstract theoretical statements and questions, to ever more concrete forms determining the character of contemporary political struggles. Methodologically it can be described as an ‘extended’ case study focused on the relation between social movement resistance and the restructuring of the delivery of water in Johannesburg. Following Burawoy in making theory an important support in intellectually grappling with different contexts, and a subject of our research in its own right, my approach to the questions this work takes up is underpinned by a reading of Foucault’s work on power. Rather than standing as a static theoretical framework, however, the presentation of Foucault’s approach to power becomes the site of reconstructions which draw on multiple sources in presenting a theoretical perspective on the relations between resistance and power in the state that is open to ‘our’ difference. At its most basic, then, this thesis presents a perspective on the restructuring of the delivery of water in Johannesburg, showing how it came to be shaped by ‘a double movement between neoliberal governmentalisation and resistance’. However, if this implies the importance of understanding the development of state practices in relation to the forms of resistance it finds itself having to contend with, I also show that many of the pitfalls of contemporary social movement strategies and mobilisations come into view with an appreciation of this dynamic as well