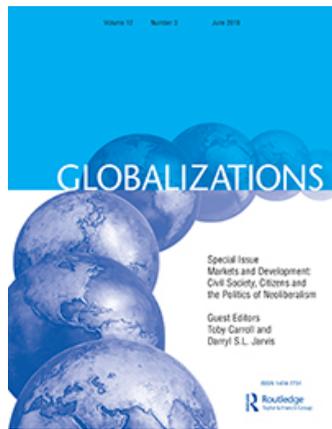


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Toby Carroll^a & Darryl S.L. Jarvis^b

^a Department of Asian and International Studies, City University of Hong Kong

^b Faculty of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, Hong Kong Institute of Education

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EDITORIAL

Markets and Development: Civil Society, Citizens, and the Politics of Neoliberalism

TOBY CARROLL* & DARRYL S.L. JARVIS**

Department of Asian and International Studies, City University of Hong Kong*; *Faculty of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, Hong Kong Institute of Education*

This special issue (SI) of *Globalisations* brings together six contributions focused on the *political* relationship between citizens, civil society, and neoliberal development policy. The dramatic increase of ‘access to finance’ investments, newly gender-sensitive approaches to building neoliberal labour markets, the universal promotion of public–private partnerships and the ‘development financing’ of extractive industries see citizens, social movements, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) engaged in and against neoliberalism in ever more intensive configurations. The precise form of this engagement is conditioned by the perceived and real opportunities and risks of an agenda which seeks to incorporate ‘emerging’ and ‘frontier markets’ within a world market, with repercussions for state–society relations, citizens, and civil society.

The six contributions to this SI each focus on different aspects of the contemporary neoliberal development agenda and its relationship to citizens and civil society—the latter simply understood as the sphere between family and the state encompassing associations, social movements, and NGOs. In one form or another, an overarching research question being asked by each of the contributors is what roles various actors are playing within civil society under late capitalism in the underdeveloped world and how these roles relate to current efforts to establish and extend markets—and market society more broadly? Starting from this overarching question, each of the articles analyses specific contexts that explore the contested nature of civil society in relation to the constitution of neoliberalism and the world market more generally.

Taken together, the articles detail the complicated relationship between citizens, civil society, neoliberalism and late capitalism, addressing not only the often contradictory nature of capitalist expansion, marketisation, and the emplacement of market relations as a primary form of social organisation, but also the manifest ways in which citizens and civil society have been both the agential authority helping support this change in some instances and, on the other, the principal agents of resistance. Many of the contributions to this SI, for example, highlight the integration of NGOs into the neoliberal project through the routinising of neoliberal processes of ‘participation’, transparency and accountability, and the degree to which neoliberalism and market discipline have been ‘normalised’ as the legitimate means of forging the social reproduction of society.

Equally, as the contributions to this SI also highlight, what is increasingly apparent is the manner in which the managed forms of ‘participation’ contained in the post-Washington consensus (PWC) have been embraced by states and some regional institutions, often in highly circumscribed terms. This has brought into question the legitimacy of such participatory forms and raised questions about the de-politicisation of inherently socially conflicted processes and of an increasing democratic deficit. Indeed, pivotal questions regarding the nature and form of involvement of non-state actors in the market-building project, not to mention the broader social and political impact of such incorporation (including the emboldening of illiberal forms of politics), raise important and ongoing questions about the management of social conflict, the constitution of social relations and the distribution of economic wealth. It is this lens, in particular, through which many of the contributions in this SI analyse and understand the inherently vexed relationship between markets, neoliberalism, citizens, and civil society.

An important dimension of the analyses in many of the contributions to this SI rests in the resistance of civil society to neoliberalism and the impact that this and certain historical material processes have had on the development of neoliberalism. As the contribution by Carroll and Jarvis suggests, these explain to a significant extent how we arrived at the current juncture of neoliberal development policy and practice—and the possible trajectories going forward. As they argue, the vexed process of forging a world capitalist market in a neoliberal image, which explicitly rests on curtailing some risks (such as those for transnational capital) while extending risks for others (especially those for individuals and workers) (Cammack, 2012), has often been a contradictory one. The highly uneven outcomes of neoliberal ‘reform’ agendas, for example, both in terms of the completeness of implementation and the material results generated have repeatedly challenged neoliberal postulations about the efficiency of markets. Indeed, this reality has frequently prompted dramatic responses from citizens and civil society, and—somewhat dialectically—been central in forcing an evolution within neoliberal development policy, with much effort expended by international finance institutions and others in order to overcome impediments to policy implementation—often through processes such as the incorporation of specific civil society actors (NGOs, for example) and the state into the policy adjustment process.

Examples of these types of accommodations are numerous. Structural adjustment programmes in sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America or Asia (during the 1997–1998 ‘Asian’ crisis), for example, often had immediate negative impact upon large segments of domestic populations, raising vocal responses from activists and some governments who subsequently softened neoliberal structural reform programmes or distorted their implementation (see e.g. Stiglitz, 2002, pp. 17–19; The Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network, 2004). More obviously, the response by neoliberalism itself in the form of the ‘PWC’ which emphasised depoliticised notions of ‘participation’, bottom-up development, ‘social development’, and ‘ownership’ also demonstrated the inherent adaptiveness of the neoliberal agenda in exploring alternative mechanisms of political and ideational transfer as part of a broader response focused on strategies of implementation in an effort to overcome the resistance of citizens and civil society. The World Bank, in particular, forged new models of co-option designed to smooth implementation processes by reaching out to forces within the state and civil society, attracting prominent figures from progressive global NGOs to join its ranks, often through formalised roles in community consultation, good governance agendas, and third-party funding for the monitoring of programme implementation and outcomes.

Despite the best efforts of PWC advocates to incorporate elements within civil society, however, developments in the global political economy (in particular, the global financial and economic crises of the late 2000s, the increasingly inequitable distribution of growth under late capitalism, and the persistence of various forces resistant to neoliberalism) have hardly made the job of legitimising neoliberalism and the building of neoliberal institutions a straightforward task. Much of the blame for the onset of the most recent series of financial crises, for example, lays at the feet of neoliberal policies (particularly banking deregulation), with movements such as ‘Occupy’ drawing attention to the contradictions of neoliberal policies that, on the one hand, promoted self-regulation or ‘light touch regulation’ on the basis of economic efficiency and higher rates of return, but on the other witnessed massive state intervention in order to socialise the risks of the private banking sector. Equally, the application of the Troika’s austerity measures in Europe has similarly brought negative attention to the social repercussions of neoliberal policy sets, in much the same way that hostility was directed towards the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s.

In the underdeveloped/developing world, where local resistance to neoliberal policies has continued, a significant challenge to the PWC’s appeal has stemmed from broader transformations in the global political economy. Here, two trends are worth noting. First, the rise of less-than-straightforward (in a neoliberal sense) development stories, such as China and Vietnam, has presented examples of developmental/growth success that do not fit the neoliberal mould, presenting demonstrable evidence of other roads to successful development. Second, new flows of foreign direct investment (FDI) derived from capital clamouring for returns in ‘emerging and frontier markets’ (coined in terms of ‘investment-worthy’ groupings of countries such as ‘the BRICS’ (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), ‘the CIVETS’ (Columbia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa), and ‘the Next 11’) and the rise of a resource-hungry China have presented some underdeveloped countries with new options that diminish the leverage of ‘borrowers of last resort’. If the World Bank and the IMF faced implementation hurdles in building idealised institutional bundles to regulate liberal markets before—in the form of ‘vested interests’ and vocal activists—this new politics of development has demanded yet further reconsideration of the way in which neoliberal development policy and practice sustains its relevance and influence.

Fortunately for adaptive neoliberals, in an environment where states have been incorporated into the global political economy—in part through Washington consensus processes of liberalising capital accounts and trade—there are strong incentives for them to ‘establish enabling environments for capital’ and engage in something of an end-of-development scramble for FDI, despite the implications this might have upon restive populations. Indeed, it is within this context that the very latest neoliberal development modalities, variously addressed by contributors to this SI, have taken root. Importantly, for states looking for policy options in the face of ongoing challenges within the disciplinary orbit of global capitalism, not to mention emboldened aspirations for representation on the part of some populations, many of these modalities have proven attractive—often with authoritarian states which have seemingly embraced PWC-esque efforts towards managing the emergent forms of politics.

Finally, a note should be made regarding the geographical focus of this SI. All but two of the articles focus on Asia. The collection originally started out as part of a broader project focused on understanding marketising processes in Asia exclusively. This geographical focus was deliberate. Despite being home to the often vaunted ‘developmental state’, Asia has increasingly been host to market-oriented agendas from well before the crisis of 1997–1998—when Washington consensus-style structural adjustment was famously applied to countries such as South Korea, Indonesia, and Thailand. For neoliberal development organisations, the region has thus been

pivotal as both a site of high-growth ‘emerging and frontier markets’ and also a policy laboratory in which neoliberal structural adjustment, PWC, and contemporary market-led development agendas have been widely plied. Since the late 1990s, for example, the region has been a ‘testing ground’ for ‘cutting edge’ neoliberal development modalities such as the World Bank’s Kecamatan Development Program in Indonesia and the KALAHI-CIDDS programme in the Philippines—programmes which drew upon particular readings of civil society and its relationship to good governance and liberal markets. Crucially, Asia has also been an important battleground over neoliberalism, with a well-documented history of struggle by both elite and popular interests (albeit often taking very different forms) against market reform and the structural adjustment reform programmes implemented in the wake of the 1997–1998 Asian financial crises. Indeed, even more importantly, neoliberalism’s very legitimacy has also been tested in Asia by both the success of non-neoliberal and or heterodox/unorthodox approaches to development—especially by countries such as Vietnam and China, and historically by countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Asia, in this sense, has historically represented the epicentre of conflicting developmental visions and practices, albeit more recently it has been a region of converging policy measures focused on market-led development initiatives, marketisation, and competitiveness.

This said, the SI has broadened to include two excellent non-Asian-focused contributions, with all of the articles united in their analysis of the latest attempts to build market societies and market citizens in a neoliberal image—attempts which are being replicated around the globe. We hope that readers of *Globalisations* will find this collection of use in disentangling the complicated relationship between citizens, civil society and neoliberalism and encourage readers to seek out the three other SIs and two edited volumes that have been part of this broader research project (Carroll, 2012; Carroll & Jarvis, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2015).

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