

Where in the world does neoliberalism come from?

The market agenda in southern perspective

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Abstract Neoliberalism is generally understood as a system of ideas circulated by a network of right-wing intellectuals, or as an economic system mutation resulting from crises of profitability in capitalism. Both interpretations prioritize the global North. We propose an approach to neoliberalism that prioritizes the experience of the global South, and sees neoliberalism gaining its main political strength as a development strategy displacing those hegemonic before the 1970s. From Southern perspectives, a distinct set of issues about neoliberalism becomes central: the formative role of the state, including the military; the expansion of world commodity trade, including minerals; agriculture, informality, and the transformation of rural society. Thinkers from the global South who have foregrounded these issues need close attention from the North and exemplify a new architecture of knowledge in critical social science.

Keywords Neoliberalism · Global South · Market · Intellectuals · State · Trade · Agriculture · Informal economy · Development

In our generation, neoliberal power and market-dominated society have become practical reality for much of the world's population. Policy agendas that combine tax cuts, deregulation, privatization, trade liberalization, insecure labor, and the squeezing of welfare, education, and health spending have gained immense influence since the 1970s. Adopted by social-democratic as well as conservative parties, these agendas have survived several decades of critique, crisis, and resistance (Cahill et al. 2012).

Equally important are social and cultural changes, ranging from league tables for schools to the proliferation of confected competitions on television. A spectacular

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growth of auditing mechanisms (splendidly analyzed by Power 1999), and a language of “excellence” and competitive “performance,” have been changing organizational life. Market thinking penetrates communities and even families, changing the way people relate to each other and think about their everyday lives (Braedley and Luxton 2010).

How coherent “neoliberalism” really is has been the subject of much debate. Some scholars treat all these phenomena as growing from “a single, fundamental principle” (Mudge 2008, p. 706), the supremacy of market competition. Others question the programmatic coherence of actually existing neoliberalism (Larner 2000; Thurbon 2012). An influential recent book treats neoliberalism as an assortment of technologies of government that can be moved around the world independently of each other (Ong 2006). Some researchers emphasize the different styles and sequences of neoliberal power in different world regions (Phillips 2004; Chester 2012).

There are certainly varieties of neoliberalism. The “Ordoliberalism” of a group of economists in postwar Germany emphasised private property, enterprise, and competition on the one hand, but consumer autonomy and anti-monopoly on the other—setting this agenda against the corporate capital that supported the Chicago school (Oliver 1960; Rieter and Schmolz 1993). In the last three decades we have seen religious as well as secular neoliberalism, neoliberalism of labor parties and of the far right, and neoliberalism of dictatorships as well as parliamentary neoliberalism. What is in question, then, is a broad historical shift in ideology and practice rather than a single doctrine.

This shift has become a strategic problem for progressive politics and social thought. To understand the world we are now in, we need to understand where neoliberalism comes from and why it has gained such strength. In this article we argue that a misperception of these issues has been dominant in social science. The reason is understandable: the most influential accounts of neoliberalism are grounded in the social experience of the global North, which is in fact only a fragment of the story.

The geopolitical pattern of knowledge that prioritizes the North is now recognized as a major problem in social science. It is contested in a vigorous critical literature, including work on the global economy of knowledge (Hountondji 1997), southern theory (Connell 2007; Meekosha 2011), alternative traditions in social science (Alatas 2006; Patel 2010), postcolonial sociology (Bhambra 2007; Reuter and Villa 2010), indigenous knowledge (Odora Hoppers 2002), the psychology of liberation (Montero 2007), decolonial thought (Quijano 2000; Mignolo 2007), the decolonization of methodology (Smith 1999), and more.

These varied contributions all point to the need for social science to pay far more attention to the modern social experience of the majority world, and recognize the work of intellectuals generating theory, as well as data, from the periphery.

This article explores neoliberalism by prioritizing research and thought from the global South, broadly understood (for definition see Dados and Connell 2012). We begin with the most familiar accounts of where neoliberalism comes from, suggesting why they are insufficient. We then identify a central theme in the history of neoliberalism across the South, the market agenda’s role as a development strategy. We follow this clue into three major arenas of debate and social struggle across the South: global trade, the state and military force, and land and agriculture. We present, all too briefly,

examples of work from different groups of intellectuals that build up a picture of neoliberalism closer to the social experience of the periphery. In this approach there is certainly a risk of over-generalizing. We think it a risk worth taking for a richer and more empowering understanding of the market agenda, its sources, and its consequences on a world scale.

Origin stories in the metropole

The most influential accounts of the origins of neoliberalism fall into two groups. The first story is presented with minor variations in David Harvey's much-read *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005), Barry Smart's less-read *Economy, Culture and Society: A Sociological Critique of Neo-liberalism* (2003), Joseph Stiglitz's mild-mannered *Globalization and its Discontents* (2002), Naomi Klein's hard-edged *The Shock Doctrine* (2007), and in many other texts. This approach treats neoliberalism centrally as a system of ideas, amounting to a shift in the dominant ideology of capitalist society, "the ruling ideas of the time" (Harvey 2005, p. 36).

In this narrative, neoliberal doctrine sprang from a group of right-wing economists in Europe and the United States in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, notably Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman. This group rejected Keynesian economics and the welfare state, seeing state economic intervention as "the road to serfdom" (in Hayek's famous phrase), and argued for free markets as the basis of decision-making in every sphere. Gradually spread via the Mont Pelerin Society, the Chicago school of economics, and corporate-funded foundations in the USA, their ideas moved from margin to center when picked up by Thatcher and Reagan as a new agenda for populist right-wing politics, and by Volker, at the US Federal Reserve, as a guide to economic policy. Thatcher led the attack on the bloated welfare state, Reagan the attack on progressive taxation.

The model was then rolled out globally via the IMF and World Bank, structural adjustment programs (SAPs), and the Washington Consensus on global economic policy. For this part of the story, Klein emphasizes dictatorship, violence, and intimidation, Stiglitz emphasizes changed doctrine within the international financial institutions. But the overall narrative is the same: a system of ideas generated in the global North gains political influence in the North and is then imposed on the global South.

A similar sequence is explored in a different style in the "governmentality" literature about neoliberalism. In lectures delivered in 1979, Michel Foucault traced the intellectual lineage of European and US neoliberal thought. He presented the American version, especially, as a new way of construing the economic subject as an "entrepreneur of himself" (Foucault 2004). Later work by Aihwa Ong (2006) and many others has described both the market technologies by which populations are governed, through regimes of incentives and disincentives, and the creation of the new subjectivities required by market discourse.

The governmentality approach allows for a more varied picture of neoliberalism and its sites, and more emphasis on the everyday dimension of power. But it shares the story about origins. Mitchell Dean, for instance, describes neoliberalism as a "militant thought collective" (2012, p. 86), and he is referring to the same array of European and North American right-wing intellectuals: Hayek, Friedman, and their friends. This

is Foucault's story as much as it is Harvey's, and for that matter Bourdieu's (1998), for whom neoliberalism is a mad utopian doctrine foisted on modern society by an unholy alliance of economists, businessmen, and technocrats.

The second group of origin stories focusses on economic mechanisms and assumes a systems model of capitalism. Examples are Stephen Haseler's *The Super-Rich* (2000), and William Robinson's (2001) valuable work on the rise of a transnational state. The logic is best represented by Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy's *Capital Resurgent: Roots of the Neoliberal Revolution* (2004).

Duménil and Lévy's thesis is that a crisis in capitalism emerged in the United States and western Europe in the late 1960s and 1970s, specifically a trough in profitability. Neoliberalism expresses the "political will" of the capitalist class, especially financial institutions, to restore their revenues and power. The "neoliberal revolution" achieved this by clamping down on inflation and social entitlements and exporting the negative effects to the global periphery (e.g., the Latin American debt crisis), or to vulnerable groups in the metropole (the unemployed, workers on low wages). New mechanisms were created that siphoned the benefits of economic growth towards shareholders and financiers, creating the financialization that is now a marked feature of the rich capitalist economies.

Essentially, Duménil and Lévy trace neoliberalism to the economic system dynamics of capitalism. The driving force is the material interest of the capitalist class, especially its most wealthy and influential sectors. Neoliberalism is, in effect, a new stage in the development of an integrated capitalist system.

The idea of a capitalist system undergoing crisis and mutation is also the basis of the prescient analysis of neoliberalism by Antonio Negri. In 1973 Negri published an account of the "enterprise-state" (*stato-impresa*), and the shift away from Keynesianism, as a strategy of capital. Negri's argument centered not on the strength of capitalism as a system, but on its weakness. The economic mechanisms of capitalism had been so de-structured by working-class struggle that new means of valorization had to be created, which could only be done "within a project that is qualitatively different from that of reformist planning." This meant a disarticulation of production from circulation and the creation of a new kind of productive subject who could not act collectively. In another text, Negri showed how productivity itself became the mechanism of legitimation and capital attempted to exploit not just labor within the factory but productive social life as a whole—a theme pursued, much later, in the famous book *Empire* (Negri 1973, 1977; Hardt and Negri 2000; Connell 2012).

There is a tendency in this whole literature, perhaps stronger in the first group of stories but also present in the second, to separate neoliberal theory from neoliberal practice. The theory is treated as pure neoliberalism, the practice as its always-imperfect realization. No doubt this is partly because the theory is so easily available, in hardline texts such as Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962). It is partly because neoliberal policy entrepreneurs themselves talked this way, frequently lambasting politicians who lacked the courage to implement the hard line. But this separation has the unfortunate effect of diverting our attention from the practical problems (possibly very different from those that preoccupied Friedman or Hayek) to which neoliberal practices seemed to offer solutions.

The two groups of origin stories share a geo-political perspective. The cultural stories focus on intellectuals in Europe and the United States; the political-economy

stories focus on the economy of Europe and the United States. When neoliberalism appears elsewhere, it is an export from the North or a copy of Northern policies. Here, for instance, is the sequence as pictured by a prolific team in critical geography:

Neoliberalism first gained prominence during the late 1970s as a strategic political response to the declining profitability of mass production industries and the crises of Keynesian-welfarism.... Furthermore, following the debt crisis of the early 1980s, neoliberal programs of restructuring were extended selectively across the global South through the efforts of US-influenced multilateral agencies to subject peripheral and semi-peripheral states to the discipline of capital markets (Peck et al. 2009, p. 50).

Similarly Drake (2006, p. 26) opens a paper on the hegemony of US economic doctrines with the sentence “The implantation of U.S. neoliberalism in Latin America in the closing decades of the twentieth century resembled the installation of U.S. laissez-faire doctrines in the opening decades of that same century.” The literature on neoliberalism thus follows a familiar pattern in social science, finding the causal dynamic in the North and treating the rest of the world as the scene of application of Northern ideas.

Database searches show that papers explicitly referencing “neoliberalism” became a substantial literature in English-language social science journals between 1992 and 1996. This literature mainly concerned privatization, de-industrialization, welfare state rollback, and their consequences—clearly addressing the Thatcher/Reagan agenda. There had been, in fact, an earlier literature about neoliberalism in the global South (e.g., Bailey 1965), which was focused on markedly different themes. Of 73 studies on neoliberalism published between 1980 and 1989, 27 were about Latin America, with a significant portion focused on agriculture (e.g., Silva 1987, 1988). These earlier publications were *not* referenced when the Northern critical research emerged in the 1990s.

The fact that two decades’ worth of intellectual work on market agendas could be so easily omitted from accounts produced after 1990 requires some careful reflection on knowledge production on a world scale. The mainstream economy of knowledge privileges universalizing models of theory while marginalizing work that is located in specific spatio-historical contexts, especially in the South, as ethnographic or descriptive only (Connell 2007; Hountondji 1997; Santos 2007; Chakrabarty 2000). Accounts of neoliberalism that address changes in social, political, and economic life specific to regions outside Europe and North America are very likely to fall into this disregard; if they appear at all, to be no more than footnotes in the story of neoliberalism.

Yet to understand the world-wide transition towards market society, these disregarded studies are strategic. Agriculture and land ownership matter. They were central in national liberation, development politics, and economic self-sufficiency. It is not surprising that they were key sites, in the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1980s, for the restructuring of the post-colonial state.

While the history of land ownership and agricultural production in the global North has a very different trajectory from that of the post-colonial world, the two are intimately linked by the history of colonial expansion and imperialism. The

experience of colonization and the global relationships forged in that history remain central to the production of social life and the construction of knowledge in the post-colonial world. They are yet to find serious currency in narratives of neoliberal transition.

Re-thinking content and sequence: neoliberalism as development strategy

A key question is how neoliberalism became the institutionalized framework of state policy, and here the Northern-centered narratives encounter a disturbing anomaly. The first substantially neoliberal regime was actually in the far South, the civil-military dictatorship in Chile, which turned to neoliberal policies as General Pinochet consolidated his personal power during 1974 (Silva 1996).

By the time Reagan came to power in the United States, neoliberal moves were already proliferating around the global periphery. There were neoliberal currents in other authoritarian regimes in South America in the 1970s, including Brasil and Uruguay (Calvo 1979). Indeed some of these currents had emerged in the 1960s. Neoliberal initiatives were being promoted in Turkey in 1978–79 and were turned into a national policy framework by Turgut Özal in the “January 24 package” of 1980 (Ozel 2003). In the settler-colonial state of Australia, an across-the-board cut to tariffs was enacted as early as 1973, by a Labor government—a key step towards abandoning state-supported industrialization.

The neoliberal agenda of the Pinochet regime is quite well known. In the Northern literature it is often mentioned and then forgotten; or it is recuperated, by exaggerating the influence of the Chicago school economists, via their Chilean students who became policymakers and entrepreneurs and were dubbed by Santiago wits “los Chicago Boys.”. However vibrant, the link with Chicago does not begin to explain why a culturally conservative military leader would adopt an economic ideology *not* at the time mainstream in the United States.

The explanation is not difficult (Valdés 1995; Silva 1996; Moulian 2002). The Chicago Boys—and the other players in the making of the dictatorship’s economic policy—were not offering General Pinochet a textbook of economic theory. They were offering a solution to his main political problem: how to get legitimacy by economic growth, satisfy his backers in the Chilean propertied class, and keep the diplomatic support of the United States, without giving an opening to his opponents in the political parties and labor movement. Neoliberalism *as a development strategy* met those needs. It abandoned the previous strategy of industrialization, thus weakening the industrial working class and the unions based on it. It looked for growth to an expansion of export industries and found them in mining and commercial agriculture. It thus re-oriented the economy to international trade. It opened the economy to international capital—which in the second half of the 1970s, the petrodollar era, was looking for investments and did flow into Chile on a large scale.

Entrepreneurial finance capital mushroomed around this flow, particularly three powerful firms, Cruzat-Larraín, Banco Hipotecario de Chile, and Edwards. Inflation was controlled via the exchange rate. Until the global economic downturn of 1981–2, these mechanisms worked well, from the point of view of the regime. In that crisis the Chicago Boys went under. But the dictatorship survived, hammering out a modified

neoliberal agenda with the more established sectors of Chilean capital. This became the economic framework for the “return to democracy” in 1989 and remained in place afterwards.

In the settler-colonial societies of the south-west Pacific, neoliberal agendas were brought in by successful social-democratic leaders, not ruling-class politicians. “Rogernomics”, the creation of the New Zealand finance minister Roger Douglas in the 1980s, was as vehement as anything happening in the United Kingdom or United States at the time. Douglas’s memoirs, which have the telling title *Toward Prosperity*, show that Labour Party neoliberalism was seen as a means of overcoming the economic stagnation under the previous right-wing government (Douglas and Callan 1987). The main deregulation measures in Australia were brought in by the Australian Labor Party federal treasurer Paul Keating, who in 1986 famously declared that Australia had to become more internationally competitive or it would become a “banana republic”, a “third-rate economy”. This statement defended a major turn towards neoliberalism, locally called “economic rationalism” (Pusey 1991). It illustrates the fear that drove the policies—that growth would stop and Australia’s privileged living standards would collapse.

So neoliberalism did not enter the world scene as an attack on the bloated welfare state. In many parts of the developing world, including the most populous, there was no welfare state to bloat. In those parts of the South where moves towards a welfare state had been made, it was limited in scale (Argentina under the Peronists), confined to a dominant ethnic group (South Africa under Apartheid), associated with a fraction of the state (Jordan, the armed forces), or protected initially by the parties that brought in deregulation (Australia and New Zealand).

What neoliberal policymakers had to attack worldwide, often using Cold-War tools, was *other development strategies*. The main rivals, adopted by many post-colonial elites in the 1950s and 1960s, were capitalist import-replacement industrialization (IRI), the strategy urged at the time by Prebisch, Furtado, and CEPAL, followed in the South Pacific as well as Latin America and South Africa); and Soviet-inspired state-centered command economies (followed in the Arab world as well as South and East Asia).

Over time, neoliberal economists, journalists, and politicians by sheer repetition created a widespread impression that these alternatives had “failed” or were “exhausted”. There is considerable evidence that IRI, at least, did not fail economically. But there is no doubt that both IRI and command economies involved unequal distributions of income, technocratic views of the state, and small local markets, making them prone to local crises (Kay 1998; Vellinga 2002). It was the social settlements around these strategies, such as labor rights and informal redistributive networks, that were at stake in the struggle over development, and were to be disrupted by the triumph of neoliberalism.

Celso Furtado made a famous distinction between growth and development. Aggregate growth in national economic indicators need not mean an improved life for the majority of the people (Furtado 1974; for an admirable English-language introduction to his thought see Mallorquín 2007). The neoliberal development strategy, seeking growth for a peripheral country by opening the economy to international capital and building export industries based on comparative advantage in global markets, might yield rapid growth in those sectors and stagnation in others. Samir Amin (2012) has castigated the result as “lumpen development”, lacking the balanced growth of linked

groups of industries and the social agenda of redistribution and education. One need not accept Amin's preferred alternative (an autonomous command economy) to agree that neoliberal development strategy produces a distinctive pattern of growth with important social consequences.

To summarize the argument so far: global neoliberalism cannot be understood as a by-product of the internal dynamics of the global North. Plainly, Europe and the USA and their ruling classes are important. But the story of the making of neoliberalism is bigger, and more multi-stranded, than Northern social science has usually recognized. Neoliberalism is not a projection of Northern ideology or policy, but a re-weaving of worldwide economic and social relationships. In this re-weaving, the shape of world trade, the strategies of developmental states, and the fate of agriculture, are all major issues, and we now turn to these.

Trade and extractive industries: a new mercantilism?

International trade is not a common topic in critical social science nor sociology more generally; but for thinking about neoliberalism on a world scale, it is a vital issue. There were non-neoliberal approaches to world trade. One of the architects of IRI, Raúl Prebisch, became Secretary-General of UNCTAD in the 1960s, and one of his main concerns was to open Northern markets to industrial products from the periphery, as a path to broad-based development (Prebisch 1964). But a strategy of “comparative advantage” that leveraged Southern *difference*, rather than attempting convergent development, had quicker and easier access to growing global markets.

Massive growth of material trade was made possible by new technology, but not the high-technology ICT. A key change was the rise of the humble freight container (Levinson 2006; Cudahy 2006). This began in 1956 with the voyage of the ship *Ideal-X* from Newark carrying 58 containers. It went on to increase the speed and sharply lower the cost and labor demands of freight handling, integrating land and sea transport systems. Together with super-tankers, bulk ore carriers and jet air cargo, this changed the economic and social significance of international trade. Today, seaborne traffic accounts for 90 % of total global trade, and its volume has nearly quadrupled since Prebisch's time, rising from 2,566 million tons in 1970 to 8,408 million tons in 2010 (UNCTAD 2011, p. 7). In 2008 world trade amounted to more than 50 % of world GDP (www.databank.worldbank.org). The new transport technologies created conditions favorable for the restructuring of domestic economies, not by local social settlements, but via transnational markets.

Southern difference takes several forms, among them labor costs, space, agricultural land, climate, mineral deposits, and local power structures. Export-oriented industrialization based not on an educated workforce but on cheap labor is a familiar part of the neoliberal story. Cases include the *maquilas* of northern Mexico, the factories of the “south China miracle”, and the poorly regulated clothing industry of Turkey (Velasco Ortiz and Contreras 2011; Lee 1998; Kumbetoglu et al. 2010).

It was the *combination* of three differences—low labor costs, regional development strategies, and a local state prepared to carve out space for the purpose—that led to the most distinctive feature of neoliberal geography, the export processing zone. Not all such initiatives worked, as shown by Keshavarzian's (2010) striking study of two

export processing zones on the Persian Gulf, one set up by Dubai and the other by Iran. But the idea remains a feature of neoliberal development strategy. In India, legislation to facilitate special economic zones was proposed in 2000, and agricultural land has been seized to implement such zones (Aggarwal 2006; Banerjee 2010).

Minerals, including oil, are very prominent in the comparative-advantage strategy. Extractive industry had been a feature of imperial economies, from the fabulous silver mines of Potosí, to the diamonds and gold of South Africa—over which the Dutch and British settlers fought several wars—to middle-eastern oil, seized by the British in the early twentieth century. Persian Gulf oil continues to be globally important, an enclave development on a massive scale (Askari 2006), based on tripartite deals among local rulers, transnational corporations, and Northern military power.

Across most of Africa, Moeletsi Mbeki (2009) argues, similar deals are the mode of contemporary articulation with the global economy. In most cases the mining and oil-pumping industries have little payoff for the peasant and urban majority. Here the idea of neoliberalism as a development strategy reaches a logical limit. Growth takes the form of rents extracted by predatory elites, who, Mbeki argues, are not a productive bourgeoisie. The principal exception is South Africa, where a degree of industrialization and local corporate development did occur, crystallized in the “minerals-energy complex” at the center of the national economy. Since the ANC’s dramatic neoliberal turn in the 1990s, local manufacturing has been destroyed by cheap imports, especially from China. This keeps mining wages down, but gives no capacity to soak up mass unemployment—a quarter of the labor force is now *officially* counted as unemployed (Statistics South Africa 2013).

The growth of world trade, the collapse of the Soviet empire, and the turn to comparative advantage across most of the periphery have produced an expanding and heterogeneous global capitalism. Some parts of the periphery have de-industrialized in favor of primary export industries, including Chile and Australia as well as South Africa; this risks long-term deterioration in the terms of trade, the problem Prebisch warned against in 1950. Civil war and social devastation followed the extractive-industry deals with transnational capital in countries as far apart as Nigeria and Papua New Guinea. Wealth is available for political elites that can position themselves favorably in trade and financial flows; they include Singapore’s People’s Action Party and the monarchy in Morocco, both of which are essentially family companies, and on a larger scale, the post-communist power elite in Russia. The post-authoritarian regimes in Brasil and India have managed a more “balanced” development at the cost of deep social inequalities. Although one would hesitate to call the Chinese regime neoliberal, it has certainly adapted to the neoliberal trade regime. Its unique combination of command economy and robber-baron capitalism has produced spectacular industrial growth, as well as social tension and environmental devastation.

Contemplating this panorama, it is difficult to see the clean lines of either neoclassical or orthodox-marxist models of capitalism. There are certainly patterns of dependency. Samir Amin pithily called capitalism a system of uneven development on a world scale in which “the centres ‘restructure’ themselves and the peripheries are ‘adjusted’ to these restructurings” (Arestis and Sawyer 2000). Mbeki (2009), reaching further back for analogies, went so far as to call the North’s contemporary relationship with Africa a “new mercantilism”, the current

mineral-export trade having structural similarities to the eighteenth-century slave trade.

However, dependency is no longer one-way, as the relocation of world industrial production and the diversity of elite strategies in the periphery show. Neoliberalism on a world scale seems to have produced a more diversified and chaotic economic process, but one that is far from the “weightless economy” invoked by commentators on financialization, since it rests on a massive weight of material trade. And if market society has not yet produced its own gravediggers, it has certainly produced its paradoxes; not least, the global free market’s reliance on widespread political coercion.

State, society, and coercion

Transactions of the kind Mbeki emphasizes place the state structures and governing elites of the periphery in a key position. Whether neoliberalism has really led to a retreat of the state is now widely questioned. In much of the global South, the market agenda seems rather to have re-organized state elites, and re-structured, sometimes to the point of crisis, social arrangements between the state and the wider population.

States existed before colonization in many parts of the world, as seen in Tunisian social scientist Abdelkader Zghal’s study of the state in the Maghrib. Zghal (1971) distinguishes between zones that were always under the control of a central authority—referred to as the *makhzen*—and those, generally non-urban, zones outside central control, either in conflict or accommodation with it. In Arabic, *makhzen* generally denotes a warehouse or storage depot. However, in the Maghrib there has been a long historical association of the word with the central authority that collected taxes; in Morocco current usage of the word often denotes the police. Colonization reshaped these social relations and, with the drive to national independence, increasingly brought the zones of dissidence under the control of a central authority. In exchange, the *makhzen* entered into what Jamshidi (2011), writing about Tunisia, calls a “bread contract” with society. In this, the people tolerate a repressive state in return for the provision of basic services and goods, and some employment.

State intervention in markets has been normal in most of the colonized and postcolonial world. Antonella Attili Cardamone’s (2010) discussion of state-led restructuring in Mexico is a contemporary example. Neoliberalism in the global South can draw on a long historical trajectory of coercion. Colonial society was not so much regulated by the state, it was *produced* by the state. This occurred through the violence of conquest and the installation of what Valentine Mudimbe (1994) calls the “colonizing structure”—the apparatus of rule that undertook the domination of space, the integration of local economies into a capitalist world economy, and the re-forming of the natives’ minds via missions and schools.

Such structures were contested but not destroyed by decolonization, and their continuity has underpinned the power of post-colonial elites (Mbeki 2009; Mohamadieh 2008). Mbeki argues that Africa today is ruled by “a purely government class” parasitical on the rest of the population, acting as consumers rather than producers and employing state violence to stay in power. Achille Mbembe’s celebrated *On the Postcolony* (2001) paints an even grimmer picture of predatory post-colonial

regimes aided by international support for trade and minerals concessions. Violence, corruption, and deregulation have led to “indirect private government”, in Mbembe’s phrase, where the state has lost its capacity for redistribution but continues to operate as an instrument of coercion.

State power also made possible the export processing zones, often cited by the international financial institutions as cases of successful restructuring. These zones of capital accumulation are established through coalitions of state officials, local business elites, and international corporate actors (Keshavarzian 2010; Nazzal 2005; Aggarwal 2006). They represent, like “indirect private government”, a blurring of public and private sectors rather than a retreat of the state. And their value for broader development is debatable. Mary Nazzal’s (2005) study of Jordan’s Qualified Industrial Zones demonstrates that improvements in fiscal indicators (growth in GDP, national debt as a percentage of GDP) need not reflect real improvement in living conditions for the majority of the population.

Global neoliberalism has thus evolved new organizational forms and has created opportunities for state elites in many parts of the South. But it has also *disrupted* some of the accommodations on which local elite power rested, such as the “tacit social contracts” between society and authoritarian state in north Africa (Jamshidi 2011; Mohamadieh 2008). Mbembe points out for central Africa that the postcolonial state, as it ceased to be a guarantor of profits for colonizers, became a means of informal redistribution locally through kinship and political networks. But to neoliberal reformers, especially those in the World Bank, IMF, and other international agencies, these arrangements appeared as corruption, nepotism, and unproductive state employment. When the international agencies had leverage—for instance conditionalities imposed on loans—they could and did apply pressure for “good governance”, a theme that emerged strongly in the 1990s after the problems created by the first round of Structural Adjustment Programmes.

The contradictions of the state and neoliberalism in the periphery are perhaps sharpest around the security apparatus. A study of neoliberal politics across Latin America published by a former US government advisor some years *before* the coup in Chile, documents the diffusion of neoliberal ideas through organizations involving businessmen and industrialists. Bailey (1965) classifies their activities as “defense” (civic action, education, and propaganda campaigns promoting private enterprise) and “aggressive attack policies” (blacklisting and infiltration of unions, movements, and universities). While military intervention is not directly specified under “attack” activities, the article begins by celebrating Brazil’s military coup of 1964 as ‘the greatest success the Neoliberals have had so far in their 4 or 5 years of existence’ (Bailey 1965, p. 445).

One of the earliest accounts of military neoliberalism is Roberto Calvo’s 1979 book *La doctrina militar de la seguridad nacional: autoritarismo político y neoliberalismo económico en el Cono Sur*. His topic was not the neoliberalism of self-optimising individuals about which Foucault was lecturing at the time in Paris, but an economic strategy imposed by force. Calvo examines the shift towards authoritarian rule in the Americas since 1961 when Paraguay was still a “military island in the middle of a sea of civilian governments”. Neoliberalism did not drive this shift, but was part of the anti-communist ideological matrix from which military rulers could and did draw. The particular combination of authoritarianism, politics, and neoliberal economics that

developed was justified by an ideology of “national security” (Calvo 1979, pp. 5–13). In the face of strong populist political movements and mass mobilization in the 1960s, the military was presented as the only group capable of holding society together. The Brazilian general Jose Alfred Amaral Gurgel defined national security as “the guarantee given by the state for the defence of national objectives in the face of existing antagonism and pressure” (Calvo 1979, p. 66). He was one of a number of southern-cone officers who became ideologists blending the concept of security with a concept of economic growth; an example is a 1976 article on the “Theory of National Security” by General Alejandro Medina, a leading figure in the Chilean dictatorship.

In much of the Arab world, secular police states emerged after Independence and significantly shaped social formations. In Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Algeria, and Libya, control of popular movements was seized by military leaders. Mourin Rabbani (2011) notes that these regimes differed from the Latin American military juntas and the Soviet bloc dictatorships since the demographics of a large conscript army made military force unreliable in the face of domestic opposition. Domestic security agencies (*mukhabarat* in Arabic) grew; their approach was to recruit “every living being within their realm” rather than to neutralize specific threats. For similar reasons to those that curbed the reliability of a conscript army, the security forces did not intend large-scale operations so much as diffuse social control. In many cases it was regimes of this kind that met the intensified global neoliberalism of the 1980s. Toye (1992) noted that World Bank Structural Adjustment Programmes of the time took no account of the political context or process. Indeed, authoritarian governments in Turkey, Ghana, and Thailand “adjusted” better than more democratic governments when their performance was measured by World Bank criteria.

But these programmes carried political risk for the regimes. Jordan, which began a Structural Adjustment Programme in 1989, illustrates the tactical handling of this risk. Welfare budgets were consistently reduced *except* for military and security personnel and their families (Nazzal 2005; Baylouny 2008). This was not a minor exception, because the Jordanian military employs 20 % of the population in rural areas. The security apparatus had functioned as a kind of welfare state for the sections of the population most closely linked to the regime—therefore excluding the Palestinians—and the security agenda enabled the government to continue their benefits while implementing privatization and public sector cuts elsewhere.

In other countries, including the New Order dictatorship in Indonesia, the military elite became owners of business and employers of labor on a large scale, directly involved in negotiations with international capital. But in the Indonesian case, the authoritarian regime carefully avoided the risks of a turn to domestic neoliberalism. The cold war economy developed under General Suharto, rather, as a web of monopolies, subsidies, and crony arrangements (Hadiz and Robison 2003).

The main function of the military remains the deployment of force. In the Arab world, especially around the Gulf, military expenditure has been closely linked to the growth and securitization of the global oil market. A steep rise of arms imports and military expenditure coincided with oil-price increases from 1973 (Askari 2006), and this was also true in Iran (Mofid 1990). It was not only that the oil market and its corporate and state players had to be defended. The defense itself became part of an expanded international market economy. The “recycling of petro-dollars” after the oil price rise allowed direct military aid from the global North to be replaced by purchases

by the region's governments, on a very large scale—often more than half the oil revenue. The Gulf monarchies, unlike several regimes in north Africa, managed to put down unrest during the Arab Spring.

The themes raised by Zghal, Mbeki, Mbembe, Calvo, and other writers are important for an understanding of neoliberalism. The global market economy does rely extensively on coercion. But this does not happen in a consistent way. The *makhzen* in the form of an authoritarian regime can function like a firm in global markets, though more often like a landlord extracting rent from the operations of transnational capital. The military were important sponsors of IRI strategies at least up to the 1970s (that is part of the Brazilian and Turkish stories); but could also provide the coercion to speed the turn to neoliberalism (Chile in 1974, Turkey in 1980). Military and police forces discipline the low-paid and insecure workforces needed by comparative-advantage strategies; but as the dilemmas of the *mukhabarat* show, there are limits to how far this can be pushed.

Land, agriculture, and informality

The search for comparative advantage, the most consistent theme in neoliberalism as a development strategy, immediately involved land and agriculture, so rural society bulks large in Southern discussions of neoliberalism. Where there were large rural populations, land reform had been a key tenet of post-independence planning, with agendas often combining land redistribution with the centralization of agrarian administration and trade. Trade liberalisation agreements since the 1980s, and earlier in some places, have reshaped agricultural production in the South, impacting small-holder farmers and rural populations and contributing to large-scale social change.

Agrarian reform projects that redistributed land to peasants and cooperatives were important programs for many governments of developing states (Bellisario 2007; Gomez and Goldfrank 1991; Gutiérrez Sanín 2010; Amin 2006). This was rarely a smooth process. Zghal (1971, 1985), documenting agrarian reform in the Maghrib following the wars of independence, argues the reforms failed because peasants wanted property and autonomy, while post-colonial state power sought beneficiaries and pupils who could be trained to play an active role in state-directed national food production. In some cases, the failure of post-independence national development to break away from the model of colonial state power led to a rapid de-peasantization of the countryside.

Amin (2006) presents a similar argument. The colonial regimes, for instance in tropical Africa, had a preference for state administered land because this minimized production costs for commodity exports, including rents, and maximized production by forcing peasants to produce to quota. The nationalization of state land following independence was in some ways a product of this colonial system. Attempts at reform often favored small private ownership, the allocation of plots to peasants individually. Where collective production was pursued (e.g., state-administered agricultural production in China and Vietnam) it was under the banner of rejecting private ownership while expanding access to land. In both cases traditional forms of access to land were ruptured, while collective production was imbued with the legacy of colonial state power. Neoliberal land reform then focussed on accelerating private ownership of land in the name of democratizing the authoritarian excesses of state ownership.

In Chile, the military coup of 1973 led to a partial reversal of land reform, with some 33 % of land that had been distributed to peasants and cooperatives now returned to its previous owners. Bellisario (2007) argues that this “counter-reform” was partial because the dictatorship did not want to hand power back to the traditional rural elites. Garretón Merino (1989) and Valdés (1995) both argue that the civil-military dictatorship had indeed a “foundational” program of constructing a new economy and society. It intended to build a new landed class through a development agenda to produce a two-tiered agricultural economy, composed of an agribusiness sector formed by large landowners, and smaller peasant family units. The two-tier system assumed that many of the smaller farms would fail and be absorbed into larger, competitive structures, eventually producing an open land market with a modernized, capitalist-oriented agriculture (Bellisario 2007). Gomez and Goldfrank (1991) observe that agrarian reform under the dictatorship hastened the move from the earlier *hacienda* system towards an agro-industrial complex oriented to export markets as well as local production. The integration of agriculture into the world economy did not mean the end of government subsidies—rather it meant the end of assistance to small-scale farmers. Following the economic crisis of 1981–1982, the regime bolstered the agriculture sector with price supports that favored export-oriented corporate agriculture at the expense of small farms.

Restructuring of agriculture has been a significant feature of neoliberalism’s development strategy across the global South. But this has been in the context of the declining economic weight of agriculture. Agricultural revenue as a percentage of global GDP has steadily declined from 6.5 % in 1980 to reach 2.8 % in 2010 (www.databank.worldbank.org). In the global South, declines in agriculture’s share of GDP have been greater. In Turkey, revenue from agriculture declined from 26.5 % in 1980 to 9.7 % in 2010. In India, those figures were 35.4 % to 17.7 % for the same period (www.databank.worldbank.org). There has been a decline in employment in agriculture, as small farmers are disadvantaged by rising input prices and institutional changes (Aydin 2010; Amanor 2012; Zurayk 2000).

The consequences of the main neoliberal measures in agriculture—removal of price supports, the entry of transnational corporations and the integration of domestic production into global trade—have been extremely varied. Zülküf Aydin (2010) details the impact of the integration of Turkish sugar, dairy, and tobacco production into the global economy. The diversity of land holdings has been reduced, despite the stated intentions of the reforms, and a significant decline in domestic agricultural production in all sectors has followed. In the Ivory Coast, cocoa production traditionally managed by state monopoly institutions was taken over by transnational corporations in the aftermath of austerity measures in 1989. In Ghana, the demise of smallholder pineapple production for export was the result of global market competition emanating from the introduction of a new variety of pineapple in Costa Rica (Amanor 2012). A study of agricultural liberalisation in the Philippines demonstrates that overall tariff reductions from 63 % in 1980 to below 10 % by 2003 have not led to economic growth and long-term stabilization of productive sectors (Paderon 2005). Even where there has been a growth in agricultural exports, the trade balance of this sector has generally been negative (De la Cruz 2005). In India, the removal of government support structures for small-scale farmers has been followed by soaring levels of debt and bankruptcy in rural communities, and even

a recent epidemic of suicide (Chatterjee 2008; Sathe 2011; Baviskar and Sundar 2008).

Closely associated with the changes in agriculture and migration to cities, and a major feature of neoliberal reality in the South, has been the growth of the informal economy. A careful study in Tunisia (Boughzala and Kouki 2003), based on national survey data, found about half the country's labor force employed in the informal sector. Enterprises in the informal sector were relatively small, paid much less tax, produced mostly non-tradable services (e.g., building, local transport, personal services), did not follow labor laws, did not keep records, demanded long hours, and had little capital and low levels of skill. Jamshidi (2011) notes the unstable relations with the state, especially with the police, that result from large parts of the population having to survive by illicit work. The fruit and vegetable seller Mohammad Bouazizi, whose suicide triggered the rising against the Ben Ali regime that launched the Arab Spring, was one of them.

In India, rural unemployment rates have been rising since the 1990s alongside an increase in non-agricultural employment among rural inhabitants (Gupta 2005). The drive to secure a livelihood by displaced and underemployed masses is a basis for Partha Chatterjee's (2008) concept of "political society".

Like Boughzala and Kouki, Chatterjee identifies a different pattern of relationships in the informal sector, based on "non-corporate capital". Unlike the formal economy, this sector is not governed by the drive for accumulation, but by the logic of livelihood. Struggles here take the form of political mobilizations on extremely varied bases, not the familiar patterns of class relations. Chatterjee contrasts this with the realm of the state, the corporate economy, and civil society as understood in European social theory. His model has been vigorously debated in India and is doubtless too schematic. But it does theorize a polarization of social forms that can be seen in other regions too. It helps to explain the world patterning of market society, with globalizing corporate economy and middle classes but also expanding informal economies.

The growth of informal practices extends beyond "work". Asef Bayat (2004) has documented the everyday practices of families in Cairo under neoliberal restructuring. Unable to challenge the reforms politically or adjust financially to rising living costs, families would undertake "individual and quiet direct action, instead of collective decision-making", to make ends meet. Tactics include tapping into electricity and water supplies. According to a case study of the Alexandria Water Company, one million cubic metres of water go unaccounted for in the city each day. Billed at the standard price of EGP 0.73 per cubic meter, the cost of unpaid water would come to approximately EGP 266 million, or USD 44.5 million, per year. This figure is actually higher than the official figure for billed water tariffs (USAID 2005). In Egypt, professional services are also supplied informally: a substantial illegal private teaching sector exists. The informal network of "street lawyers", practitioners without law degrees who operate illegally, is also highly competitive. These "non-legal urban arrangements" highlight the economic and social value of what Indian sociologist Ravi Sundaram (2010) calls "pirate networks" in the global South where the formal economy remains out of reach for a large part of the population.

The informal economy is important even in neoliberalism's successes. Jaafar Aksikas (2007) describes the expansion of the informal sector in Morocco to constitute about half the urban economy, and argues that it has been necessary to the official economy, providing outsourcing for export-oriented firms, low-priced services, and

more. The vivid ethnography of women garment workers in north-western Turkey by Kumbetoglu et al. (2010) shows fierce exploitation of a vulnerable group in the semi-legal background of an export-oriented industry. There are many similar studies of devastating labor conditions in places where the comparative advantage is low labor costs.

Intellectuals from the South have drawn attention to another feature of informal economies in a neoliberal environment, the growth of criminal business. The clothing factories documented by Kumbetoglu et al. operate partly outside the law, evading inspection and regulation. Illicit enterprises and police corruption are everyday experiences in the life of the border region of post-NAFTA Mexico (Velasco Ortiz and Contreras 2011). Aksikas (2007) notes that smuggling was traditional business in northern Morocco and is still large-scale. Fatma Ülkü Selçuk (2011) takes a step further and argues that military intervention and structural adjustment in Turkey created the conditions for a mafioso capitalism, whose entrepreneurs overlap with the conventional bourgeoisie although their power depends on armed force. Selçuk also refers to Russia, where the restoration of neoliberal capitalism in the 1990s created similar conditions on a larger scale.

Mbembe (2001) suggests a broad criminalization of elites, as well as the emergence of autonomous and very violent war machines, in post-structural-adjustment central and western Africa. The armed bands in the Algerian civil war of the 1990s mutated, as the economy around them was deregulated, into armed entrepreneurs involved in illicit trade (Martinez 2000). The expansion of *narcotráfico* in central America is a well-known story. The drug cartels of Colombia and Mexico are booming export-oriented enterprises in developing countries, with remarkable entrepreneurial flair. Neoliberals can be proud of them, apart from the regrettable prevalence of murders.

Land, agriculture, rural society, informality, and criminal business are not major themes in the Northern literature on neoliberalism. In Southern perspective they can be seen, not just as relics of the past, but as sites of development strategy and social change, keys to the growth of mega-cities and informal economies, and stakes in political struggle.

Conclusion: changing the lens for seeing neoliberalism on a world scale

Forty years after the Chilean coup, 30 years after Thatcher and Reagan, 20 years after the peak of the Washington consensus, and 5 years after the global financial crisis, neoliberalism has certainly changed. It has been extensively contested; the World Social Forum and the “crisis of neoliberal hegemony” in Latin America (Sader 2008b) are among the visible political effects. But the worldwide extension of market logic continues, with education currently at the cutting edge—through international league tables for schools, corporatization of universities, restructuring of teaching workforces, and the redefinition of education systems as export industries pursuing comparative advantage (Compton and Weiner 2008).

This article is an effort to show the enriched understanding of neoliberalism that becomes possible when the social experience and intellectual production of the global South are given priority. To be very clear: we are not trying to build a single Southern

model of neoliberalism to displace the Northern ones. Rather, we intend to show, and partly map, a terrain of knowledge, debate, and theory that already exists and has its own concerns and emphases.

Where Northern theories have laid great emphasis on financialization, events in the periphery show the importance, at least equal, of the reshaping and expansion of global trade. The debate on the role of the state has to be re-thought drastically when post-colonial developmental states are placed centrally in the frame. The varying popular support for neoliberal regimes and the social coalitions supporting deregulation look different when neoliberalism is understood centrally as a development strategy. The key arenas of neoliberal action include agriculture, and the major social effects include the accelerated decline of peasant society and the massive growth of informal economies in the cities of the majority world.

Among the issues to be re-thought is the politically critical question of who benefits from neoliberalism and how. It is familiar that indices of economic inequality tend to rise under neoliberal rule. Surveys of Latin American and Caribbean countries have generally found this, and the countries that went through radical neoliberal reform packages showed greater increases in inequality (Huber and Solt 2004; Vellinga 2002). A notable illustration of the difficulty of moving in the other direction is the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has ruled Turkey since 2002, combining neoliberalism with a moderate Islamism—one of the most successful neoliberal parties in the world. The AKP came to power in a surge of protest, with rural support and redistributive intentions, though not a detailed program (Cosar and Özman 2004). In government, the actual policies followed mean that little redistribution has happened; the groups who provided the electoral mandate have not been the economic beneficiaries.

Broadly, it seems the opening to global investment and trade has concentrated the benefits of growth more tightly. This is obvious where the development occurs in enclaves, whether export processing zones, tourist sites (Hazbun 2004), remote mines (Mbeki 2009), or business parks (Bogaert 2012). Another straightforward reason for inequality has been the rise of unemployment, when public sector jobs have been drastically reduced, as in Algeria's shift towards neoliberalism in the 1990s (Testas 2004). More subtly, the shifts in power among fractions of the owning class that accompany dependent integration into the world economy, as argued by Armando Boito (2007) in Brasil, concentrated profits in the financial sector and enabled property-owners generally to resist the redistributive efforts of labor movements.

The main neoliberal mechanisms of development are institutionally focussed, long-distance trade being a prime case. Development aid programs, after the first wave of structural adjustment policies, increasingly emphasised “good governance” and “transparency” in developing economies, i.e. the following of formal protocols of ownership, auditing, and compliance with law. With the notable exception of criminal businesses, neoliberal growth strategies tend to concentrate benefits among those who have access to the formal economy, and thus reinforce the structural division theorized by Chatterjee.

Northern models of neoliberalism, nevertheless, continue to circulate widely in the South, not only in academic life (in accordance with the established global economy of knowledge) but also in social movements. Northern intellectuals such as Chomsky and

Negri have been iconic figures for the alter-globalization movement and for Occupy. A narrative that makes neoliberalism a Northern invention imposed on the South can be useful to politicians who paint their domestic opponents as puppets of Washington. Southern-oriented analyses of neoliberalism are, thus, potentially disturbing for the Left, as well as for neoliberals. Resistance to neoliberalism is not a matter of throwing out an alien intrusion, but requires deeper local social politics.

This problem is connected with the habit in analyses of neoliberalism, noted earlier in this article, of separating the theory from the practice, and treating the making of market society on the ground as the (imperfect) enactment of a pre-formed ideological template. This is particularly unfortunate when thinking about neoliberalism in the global South, as it downplays the agency of Southern actors in the formation of the neoliberal order. An adequate understanding of market society on a world scale will pay close attention to the roots of neoliberalism in the dilemmas of post-colonial development and state power. It will address the large-scale social and cultural changes, many of them unintended, that have already flowed from integration into world markets and condition the further evolution of neoliberal politics. The world history of neoliberalism is a history from below, a history of practices, more than anything else.

Our case for changing the lens through which we view neoliberalism is, finally, about the nature of the social-scientific lenses themselves. The substantive and political issues are mixed with epistemological issues. We noted at the start of this article the contemporary critiques of Northern dominance in the global economy of knowledge. Building a more adequate understanding of world market society is not just a question of studying differences in how a market agenda has been rolled out. It concerns the intellectual work required to theorize different experiences of the production of social life, different histories of power and development.

Land reform and state power are key sites where the historical and geographical specificity of postcolonial society requires revision of familiar concepts. The violent and repressive implementation of neoliberal policies in substantial parts of the global South cannot be seen simply as a genealogical variation from a dominant narrative. Rather, this must be approached as a key site of difference that has produced embodied and located accounts of state power based on specific histories of transition (Mignolo 2007; Sader 2008a). These historical and geographical dissonances must now be built in to the conceptual and theoretical base of sociological knowledge production.

Such work does not happen in a vacuum. Thinking about worldwide theoretical change requires us to think sociologically about the labor involved and the intellectual workers who do it. The conditions of intellectual work in many parts of the South are very different from those in the centers of theory in the North, in terms of funding, technology, audience, and institutional bases (see, e.g., Mkandawire 2005). The approach for which we are arguing validates local productions of theory and emphasizes links between social movements and locally knowledgeable intellectual work.

This is not, however, an argument for knowledge production in local silos. It is an argument for moving beyond the self-referentiality of Northern social science and the extraversion of intellectual work in the periphery—for moving towards a more democratic structure of theory on a world scale, in which South/South links multiply and a steady flow of theory from South to North becomes possible. Such ideas are not new, but they have a new urgency and scope in the neoliberal era. Theories of neoliberalism in the

future will look different from those most familiar today, will be generated from different sites, and will be globally inclusive in new ways. And that will be important for politics.

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