

## Symposium Report

**Date and Time:** 1 pm to 5 pm, Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015

**Place:** Sophia University Yotsuya Campus

**Title:** Neoliberalism in Motion - Consolidation and Divergence: Sociological Perspectives on Neoliberalism's Global Presence

### **Title of each presentation, presenter's name & affiliation**

1. Lenka VYLETALOVA, Sophia University, PhD candidate

*Adjustments to the Neoliberal Market: Global Human Resource Development in Japanese Corporations*

2. M. MALICK, Waseda University, PhD student, 2nd year

*In Tune with the Times: Effort, Entrepreneurship and Eigyou*

3. Monica R. de CARVALHO, Sophia University, PhD student, 1st year

*Shaping Institutions in a Neoliberal World: Considerations about Corporate Governance Practices in Brazil*

4. Irais ARENAS, Sophia University, PhD student, 1st year

*Fighting Social Problems in the Neoliberal Model: Values, Incentives and Communities in the Mexican Case*

5. Chengli JIANG, Sophia University, PhD student, 1st year

*Danwei Lost in Neoliberalism: Work and Life, State and Society in the Post-Laid-Off China*

### **Title of keynote speech, speaker's name & affiliation**

The keynote speech: *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution*

James FERGUSON, Stanford University, the Susan S. and William H. Hindle Professor in the School of Humanities and Sciences and Professor in the Department of Anthropology

### **Summary of the symposium (aim of the symposium, summary of each presentation, comments by discussants, and result of the symposium etc.)**

The aim of the symposium was to organize a discussion on neoliberalism that focused on exploring the most recent patterns and trends in neoliberalism's global expansion as well as the existing or

potential pathways followed in those countermovements consciously or unconsciously aimed at transcending the neoliberal doctrine.

In his keynote speech, Prof. Ferguson pointed the countermovements toward a grand new direction by shifting the focus of discussion from production to distribution and from labor-based distribution to claim-based distribution. He set the discussion in a general background of changing reality in the availability of jobs in a more and more advanced global industrial economy, where it was no longer feasible to expect that everyone would have a job and unemployment would become a permanent reality, while, in the meantime, surplus in production was enough to cover the basic needs of the majority of the population on Earth and, therefore, the central problematic was no longer production but distribution. He reconsidered the context and content of labor, conventionally dominantly conceptualized in terms of masculine labor, and advocated for a new, more inclusive conceptualization of labor, e.g. by giving due respect to the domestic labor provided mainly by women in most societies. By recognizing the significance in some recent cases from South Africa and other African countries, in which the state successfully managed to nurture a sense of self-respect among the poor by ensuring them a small amount yet valuable enough regular payment based on their citizenship and created the necessary condition for them to socialize and take life-improving actions such as looking for jobs, Prof. Ferguson highlighted one potential promising pathway for the world to go beyond mere criticism of the evils of neoliberalism. By doing so, he also challenged the traditional Marxist logic of countermovement centered on seizing control of means of production as well as the traditional socialist logic centered on distribution based on definitions of the senior, the disabled, etc. since the new type of distribution was based on sovereignty, on rights, and on dignity.

Through empirical studies in Japan, Brazil, Mexico, and China, the five students' presentations examined the empowerment of neoliberalism in its gripping of people's economic, political, social, and cultural life, including people's conception of economic organization, corporate practices, consumption behaviors, labor mobilization, and state-society relations, and explored people's resistance against and negotiation with neoliberalism's depressing power.

In Lenka Vyletalova's presentation, she talked about globalizing efforts of Japanese corporations and especially about the official set of policy measures, developed by the tripartite of government-industry-academia, which should enhance the development of appropriate global human resources. First she set the problem, which resides in that while the policy framework provides incentives for empowering regular workers in the organizational center, the actual source of global competency is hidden at the periphery. She then explored this paradox by contrasting in more detail two categories of employees at overseas offices, namely expatriated regular employees (*seishain*), who are sent from Japan, and locally hired (*genchi saiyou*) Japanese. She concluded that the traditional institutional context and related workplace practices prevent a smooth use of all

categories in a global rotation system, since it reduplicates the social stratification of employees and related inequality in conditions and career development chances. Locally hired Japanese are not included into the official design of 'global human resources', although they are agents of the actual globalization of Japanese society. As for the feedback, Professor James Fergusson gave her his views at first. He provided another illustration of the bias at the global scale labor market, citing the example of foreign correspondents, who are seen as the ideal globally competent professionals, but who are able to have such an aura only thanks to an invisible support of local reporters. A following question from the audience was pointing on the hardships related to the 'cultural aspects' of management practices. One graduate student asked for an explanation of the fact that Japanese expatriated managers find the work-ethics of co-nationals (Japanese) higher than those of foreigners. Lenka explained how Japanese expatriates find hard to understand the fact that working long overtime hours is not to be easily asked from foreigners in overseas offices, whereas locally hired Japanese are expected to comply with such unspoken rules by the mere fact of being Japanese.

Mira Lequin Malick's presentation focused on emerging forms of entrepreneurship found in the music industry that are increasingly geared towards practices that encourage the self-commoditization of artists, captured through the notion of *eigyō*, which in this context means to market and sell one's self and product in a manner that appears 'personalized' both for the consumer and by the artist. Such practices are at once vilified for being exploitative and superfluous to the production of music and at the same time also becoming normalized, expected and necessary for the production of music amidst the decline of sale of physical forms of music. This tension was captured by analyzing the narratives of consumer and performing artists whose opinions were by no means uniform, but often reflected value laden perceptions regarding *eigyō*. She placed this issue not as an isolated phenomenon within the music industry, but one that has emerged alongside neoliberal shifts in the economy and the accompanying socio-cultural ideas about the subjectivity best suited for such changes; one that celebrates ideas about self-responsibility, individual effort and the treatment of the self as an enterprise. In terms of the post-presentation feedback, she received two main comments. She was first questioned by Prof. Slater about whether the digitalization of music and such changes in the music industry has affected musical genres in different ways. To this she answered that music which is overtly digitally produced has actually thrived in such conditions, and that the digitalization of music has indeed affected different genres in different ways. Prof. Ferguson commented that it seems that consumers were seeking authenticity (which they felt they could experience through practices of *eigyō*) partly as a reaction to the increasing impersonality imposed by the digitalization of music. He also commented that he felt that this was a new angle on the age old artistry vs. commodity debate that has plagued discussions about musical authenticity. She acknowledged that she has been wondering about how to deal with the notion of authenticity in this study, but she also questioned the need to think of it in terms of authenticity, as the

presumption of eiygou may also be thought of, not in terms of offering consumers ‘the authentic’ but ‘the contextually intimate’ which may not be so much about offering others an authentic self, but offering others an authentic feeling of that which they seek to experience.

In Mônica R. de Carvalho’s presentation, she exposed the research outline to look into Corporate Governance practices in Brazil and, via documents and secondary sources such as codes and existing laws, attempt to assess how such set of practices develops in the country. She discussed about how the evolving corporate governance model in Brazil is progressing in response to the perceived necessity to be in line with “international best practices”, while also balancing local elements and responding to specific needs such as the fight against corruption. Her research tackles the issue of how the evolving Corporate Governance practices in Brazil reflect the need to comply with externally developed standards and at the same time to cope with local demands. To this end, she briefly proposed a conceptual framework for the research, proceeding with a description of how corporate governance best practices in Brazil are developing under local and external influences; she presented a few actual examples. Following this, she presented possible ways that local corporate governance may evolve in the context of both institutional embeddedness in global financial markets and local stakeholders’ claims. Finally, she concluded by suggesting that future research may include a comparative study assessing the case of another developing country facing similar hurdles. There were questions from the audience concerning the possible challenges to place the study of corporate governance in Brazil in the framework of a global model, implying that the spread of “homogeneous” institutions should not be taken as the only possibility. Professor James Ferguson pointed out that the development of such practices in the local context in Brazil may be a response for indigenous and probably unique forms, which should be a good angle to approach the research problem. In other words, the main suggestion – both from the audience and from Professor Ferguson was to focus on what is divergent from established governance models. Finally, professor David Wank pointed out that literature on political sociology should also be considered to support the analysis.

Irais Arenas attempted to answer the question: why people don’t want the land anymore? In 2012, Audi announced its plan to build a new factory in San Jose Chiapa. Since then, the State and companies started acquiring land from 5 municipalities; San Jose Chiapa, Rafael Lara Grajales, Soltepec, Mazapiltepec and my parents’ community; Nopalucan. From the following quote we can infer people from these communities are not resisting, but rather are worried offending “others.” “I’m a Mexican Aztec peasant and this is the way we are....But what if I offend others?”. This phenomenon raises several questions; How the “Ejido” disincorporation and foreign investment have affected the relationships among community members? People consciousness about the land, wealth, livelihood, family and future? How the State and communities will face with the condition of new community members having neither land nor wage labor? In this research, she will look at the land buying process and responses to this. She will collect the data through ethnography and participant

observation to 1) analyze changes in attitude and dynamics in communities in light of the Audi plant construction; 2) address the ways in which lands have been expropriated or sold and 3) examine some of ways in which both the State and communities have dealt with the lack of wage labour and land. Feedback: Why people want to sell their land? How this phenomenon could be applied in different contexts or it is just a Mexican rare case? What is a fair agreement? What is the real long run opportunity cost? Her answer was that people are willing to sell their lands because they want to give the opportunity to others to get jobs. It is because of the strong social ties and reciprocity embedded in communities that make people. And also because they conceive that land should for a higher purpose rather than personal gain or for greed. Land is everywhere. And since the main scarce resource is land, we should be looking at how people interpret landownership and why it means to them. How are the owner or the land in first place? .. companies? States? ... no one but everyone? Landownership and its interpretations should be considered in a broader perspective.

In her presentation on Chinese laid-off workers, Chengli Jiang examined the seemingly typically neoliberal transition from state-socialism into state-capitalism in China as China was heading away from a socialist ideology toward 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' and started to interact more and more actively with global forces since the end of 1970s. The first part of her presentation showed how fast and brutal the Chinese state had been in eliminating internal institutional and labor obstacles for the spread of capitalist spirit by highlighting the drastic dissolution of the work units (*dan wei*) system and the forced unemployment (*xia gang*) of more than 48 million workers in China in the late 1990s. However, as the second part of her presentation revealed, a closer examination at how the global and local forces had interacted, conflicted, and compromised in those laid-off workers' individual and collective worlds would rather point to the fact that the impact of neoliberalism on people's daily life and on local societies was far more complex than expected and there had been pathways out of the neoliberal predicament available to the people, to the local society, as well as to the state. Because the micro-level phenomena observed in her preliminary fieldwork were full of interesting details that could not easily fit into the conventional outlines of the neoliberal story, all of the three commentators suggested she seek new framework of understanding in her future research. In their comments, Prof. Ferguson advised her to dig deeper into the question of pathways, Prof. Ashiwa from Hitotsubashi University suggested she pay more attention to the individual laid-off workers' understanding of the transitional processes, and Prof. Srinivas from the New School University suggested she pay more attention to the laid-off workers' protest and resistance patterns.

In his concluding remarks, Prof. Ferguson addressed the theme of the symposium, Neoliberalism in Motion - Consolidation and Divergence, by saying that there were three ways of viewing the students' presentations. One was to label them all as demonstrations of neoliberalism and simply stopped there, one was to reject this and argue that they were all specific, independent

cases and therefore deny the relevance of viewing them collectively through neoliberal lenses, and the last was to see the connections among all these cases, to see how they collectively represented certain trends, and to see how, in each of these case studies, pathways had been looked for and tested.

This symposium received a lot of positive comments from the audience, the participants, and the university faculty and staff involved in the organization processes.

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シンポジウムタイトル：

テーマ・テーマの問い：

主要な発表者の議論：

シンポジウムの成果、結論、議論のまとめ：