



CALL FOR PAPERS:

'Contentions against neoliberalism: Reconstituting the social fabric in the developing world'

Democracy, Governance and Development Conference Series

**Oxford Department of International Development
University of Oxford, June 27-28th 2013**

Neoliberal economic approaches, which gained momentum in Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia with the debt crisis during the early 1980s, have adversely impacted the prospects of coordinated collective action. Most notoriously, the growing assertiveness of capital, the policy emphasis on a regulatory rather than an interventionist state, and the expansion of the informal sector, significantly weakened actors such as labour unions. As a result of these social fragmentations, class-based contention lost considerable ground and the very process of protesting was re-shaped in multiple ways.

These multiple contestations are not only forged in opposition to, or protesting against, but also in negotiation with, and building on the reformulated socio-economic and political landscape. Contributing to the reconstitution of the social fabric and reconstructing collective action, social movements have flourished around the globe, contesting the neoliberal prescriptions in various policy fields, and 'repoliticising' long-dormant development policy debates. In the most articulated forms, contentions against neoliberalism have intersected with claims for democratisation and sought to contribute to far-reaching socio-political change. Other forms of politics have also thrived under neoliberal conditions. These have been examined under a range of analytical rubrics, such as 'political society', 'everyday resistance', and 'non-movements'. In short, from mass mobilisation to 'non-movements', the examination of contentions against neoliberalism, the conditions underpinning them and the structural constraints they face, have acquired greater relevance and analytical urgency.

The conference aims to bring together scholars who are working on the reconstitution of the social fabric and the burgeoning reconstruction of collective action in different parts of the developing world. The cross-regional focus of the conference will help to generate cumulative insights to address the following questions: how does discontent with neoliberal marginalisation define identity boundaries that help contesting and negotiating the economic, social and political environment?; what are the links between reactions against neoliberalism at the micro-level (e.g. development of organisational resources)

and the subsequent impact at the macro-level (e.g. agenda-setting and policy impact)?; how do grievances stemming from the shortcomings of neoliberalism intersect with other claims related to democratisation, culturally defined identities, gender, and the like in particular national contexts?; and, what are the main formal and informal constraints to construct broader alliances to push for far-reaching reforms? Focusing on these questions, the aim of the conference is to advance our understanding of the relationship between free-market reforms and political change.

Participants of this conference will continue to develop the analytical themes emerging from prior Democracy, Governance and Development Conferences held at Oxford (2011) and London (2012). Preference will be given to doctoral students in advanced stages of writing up and postdoctoral fellows. A balance of geographical coverage of empirical data and types of mobilisation will be sought with the aim of working towards either a special issue in a peer-reviewed journal, or an edited volume.

Potential analytical themes of interest include (but not limited to):

- New forms of trade unionism and/or reshaping of 'old' trade unions
- Social movements against privatisation
- Citizenship contests
- Forging of political subjects in the neoliberal era
- Contestation of the neoliberal transformation of the state

Important dates:

- The conference is scheduled for **June 27-28, 2013**
- To apply to the conference, please submit your paper title and an abstract (500 words max. including theoretical approach) to sofia.donoso@sant.ox.ac.uk by **March 20, 2013**
- Notifications of acceptances will be circulated by **April 7, 2013**
- Final papers are due by **June 1, 2013**

Logistics:

We regret Oxford Department of International Development is not able to cover travel costs of participants. We will offer participants accommodation close to the conference venue and meals during the conference days.

Questions can be directed to:

- Sofia Donoso, Ph.D. candidate in Development Studies, St Antony's College, University of Oxford: sofia.donoso@sant.ox.ac.uk