

Neoliberalism

Projects, Discourses and Practices

Palma de Mallorca, 28. November 2013

Organisation of the talk

1. What is Neoliberalism?
2. Structure and Political Economy
Example: Neoliberal urban tourism development in the US
3. Discourse and Deconstruction
Example: Social Tourism
4. Practice (theory)

Political Economy

Political economy is concerned with the commodification of resources (material or symbolic) and the resulting accumulation and distribution of capital (not restricted merely to monetary gains, but including social and natural capital).



Political Economy

- Roles of structures (social, cultural, political, and economic) that guarantee the reproduction of capitalism
- How do these structures sustain specific power constellations?
- Context is central to the analysis (economy embedded in historical, political, sociocultural, and geographical contexts).
- Need to understand structures of relationships in order to invoke change.



What is neoliberalism?

- People behave according to self-interest; they seek out opportunities to maximize gains
- If opportunities are in market, self-interested behavior creates spin-off benefits, including new jobs, products, etc.

Solution: reduce size, role of state; free up market and make it attractive to entrepreneurs; remove opportunities for corruption and rent-seeking

Policy recommendations: less government intervention, more freedom in the market

What is Neoliberalism?

- Seeks to make state and market more efficient to accelerate growth and eliminate waste
- Places market at the center, relies on individual initiative, creativity, and ingenuity

1. Changing relationships between institutions, governance and markets

- Reduced state involvement & spending and concurrent extension of market forces
- Privatisation of assets and services: general shift away from Keynesian social policies
- Deregulation and reregulation

What is Neoliberalism?

2. Changing role of the state beyond de- and reregulation

- "in reality, it [neoliberalism] entails a thoroughgoing reorganization of governmental systems and state-economy relations" (Peck and Tickell 2007: 33).
- 'Rolling back' and 'rolling out' neoliberalisation

3. Changing focus of the state

- From provider of services to its citizens to facilitator of economic opportunities → shift from public goods to private goods.

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Urban Tourism in the US

(based on Ioannides and Petridou, forthcoming)

Roll-back neoliberalism:

- Federal fundings cuts for economically depressed urban areas
- Increased competition between cities to compete for private business investment to guarantee trickle down economic growth
- 'Geobribes': tax breaks and relaxation of regulations



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Urban Tourism in the US

(based on Ioannides and Petridou, forthcoming)

Roll-out neoliberalism:

- new institutions (public-private), policies and governmentalities
- Mega urban tourism projects: from places of industrial production to places of consumption
e.g. Detroit: "... reclaiming Detroit's future as a world-class city".
- New welfare programmes to help maintain public spaces
- Enhanced regulation (sanitisation) of public space (e.g. Times Square New York)



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Structure as Language

- Texts relate to contexts of situation and context of culture
- Texts are produced as a social practice

"If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?"



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Texts & Language as Structure

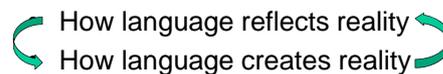
- Texts relate to contexts of situation and context of culture
- Texts are produced as a social practice
- Texts tell us about what people think, believe etc.
- Texts represent ideology (power struggle etc.)



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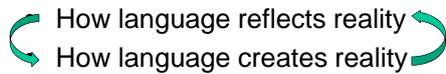
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Discourse is...



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Discourse is...



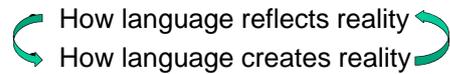
Discourses of
Capitalism



Social Practice
"make money"

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Discourse is...



- How language shapes our identities and interactions
- How language is used as a tool to control people

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Sticks and stones will break my bones. But words will never harm me...???



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Discourse

'Discourse [is] the instrument of the social construction of reality' (Theo van Leeuwen).

Discourse is characterised as:

- shaped by social structures;
- with social implications;
- socially valued and regulated (production, reception and circulation).
- produced/consumed/monitored by social actors (producers/receivers of social practices);

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Discourses of social tourism

(based on Minnaert, forthcoming)

Redistribution Discourse 1936- 1980

- Social exclusion derives from poverty → redistribution of resources to address poverty (social benefits)
- Target: Disadvantaged workers and their children
- 1936: Holiday with Pay Convention (International Labour Office)
Tourism became part of the national 'lifestyle'
- 1950-1980: Democratisation of holiday making often supported by the state via tiered, means-dependent pricing structures.

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Moral Underclass Discourse of social tourism

- 1980 – affordable mass tourism develops, reducing the need for traditional social tourism for workers. Excluded groups now include unemployed, single-parent families, families on low income, persons with disabilities
- Intervention for their inclusion into mainstream society



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Neoliberal discourse of social tourism

"By facilitating tourism access in European Destinations for society groups for which going on holiday represents a difficult or even impossible undertaking, social tourism strengthens the tourism industry's revenue generation potential in the less developed regions, particularly in regions where tourism is well developed but highly seasonal, whilst giving the opportunity to relatively unknown, small or emerging destinations to promote their offer amongst a wider spectrum of the European population". (Calypso Programme 2011)

- Target groups: senior citizens, families, youth and persons with disabilities (potentially higher ability to pay and more suppressed demand)

Neoliberal discourse of social tourism

UK tabloid in November 2011:

Social tourism is "a scheme that on the face of it is caring and kind but which rewards those who don't necessarily deserve it, and only serves to perpetuate the dependency culture that is the root of many of our social problems".

Hegemonic Discourse

"A characteristic of a dominant 'ideological-discursive formations' is the capacity to 'naturalise' ideologies, i.e. to win acceptance for them as non-ideological 'common sense'. [...] To 'denaturalise' them is the objective of a discourse analysis which adopts 'critical goals.'" (Fairclough)

Thatcher 1980s



Critiques of Structural Analyses

Over-emphasis on structures → Overdetermination

"Today's capitalist economic order is a monstrous cosmos, into which the individual is born and which in practice is for him, at least as an individual, simply a given, an immutable shell, in which he is obliged to live" (Max Weber, 2002:13).

"... human actors seem like tiny cogs on giant gears in some huge satanic factory. How can we put people back into this picture?" (Wilk and Cliggett, 2007: 112).



Deconstruction

'The main value of deconstruction lies in its critical powers and its message that things do not have to be the way they are, or be explained in ways which maintain existing structures' (Shurmer-Smith, 2002: 51).

Alternative Political Economy

political economy and post-structuralism, dualism, paradigms as distant bodies (Phillips, 2002)

- complex relationship between structuralism and post-structuralism, between structure and agency
- 'the process of deconstructing and dismantling has to be accompanied by that of constructing new ways of seeing and acting' (Escobar, 1992: 16): and thus creating alternative economic spaces.

Alternative Political Economy

A recognition of the discursive elements of making 'the economy' and the social practices through which it is (re)produced and known

Economic actors engage in social relations and processes → room for alternatives to the dominant capitalist mode of accumulation and neoliberal mode of regulation.

Practice: Search for agency(?)

- Reaction against 'structure'
- The relation between structure and agency.
- Focus on the contextually situated social processes where agents and structures co-constitute one another
- The object of analysis is situated between structuralist and individualist explanations of phenomena

Practices

Figure 1: The social-scientific foundations of practice-oriented research

Structuring, governing, and resisting practices	Bourdieu	Habitus
	Giddens	Structuration
	Foucault	Governmentality
	Certeau	Tactics
Communicative and discursive practices	Habermas	Communicative rationality
	Bakhtin	Dialogic practice
	Schutz, Goffman	Intersubjectivity
	Latour, Callon, Law	Actor-networks
Organizing, learning and networking practices	Latour, Callon, Law	Actor-networks
	M. Polanyi	Tacit knowledge
	Wenger	Communities of practice
	Amin and Cohendet	Relationality

Jones & Murphy (2010)

Practices and Neoliberalism

Institutional and individual ethnographies to understand how policies are created and rationalised by institutions and networks and to understand how institutions construct and institute particular discourses and policies.

Thank you for your attention.

28. November 2013