Inter-Asian (Post-)Neoliberalism?
*Adoption, Disjuncture and Transgression*

**Emel Akçali, Lerna K. Yanik and Ho-Fung Hung**
Special Focus Editors

**Introduction**

“Post-neoliberalism” or “after neoliberalism” is a term associated with forms of governance that emerged in the mid-late 1990s with the “Third Way” states or in the countries like the UK, Canada and Aotearoa/New Zealand and in some of the Latin American countries—such as Brazil under and after Lula, Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador. Its emergence was linked to the unfulfilled promises of neoliberalism and its incompatibility to non-Western settings. After assuming power in January 2007, Ecuador’s president Rafael Correa spoke, for instance, of his new government as bringing the country out of its “long neoliberal night” (Bebbington and Bebbington, 2011: 135). However, just like neoliberalism failing to constitute a coherent ideology and a set of policies, there has been no strict definition of what post-neoliberalism entails so far, either. Yet, a very loose definition of the term identifies post-neoliberalism as a form of governance that seeks to retain elements of the previous neoliberal projects and combine them with welfare politics and policies. Post-neoliberalism is also considered as a “detachment” from the principles of neoliberalism, bringing in more state intervention and regulation and less market-led economy (Brand and Sekler, 2009; Cecena, 2009; Demirovic, 2009; Elyachar, 2012; Grugel and Riggiozzi, 2009; McDonald and Ruckert, 2009; Evans, 2010; Peck et al., 2009, 2010a; Touraine, 2001). And, as such, it is also sometimes characterised as neo-developmentalist (see Dutkiewicz, 2011).

Jonas Wolff (2013), who informs us from within the Latin American context, suggests that post-neoliberalism means much more than a shift in economics. To him, it may also be interpreted as a process of readjusting and rebalancing liberal democratic principles by strengthening the plebiscitary and participatory aspects of democracy, as well as the economic, social and cultural dimensions of human rights (ibid.: 52). A number of scholars working on Latin America have been detecting, for instance, “an ‘experimentation with post-liberal formats of political participation’ among the new and heterogeneous
Left” (ibid.: 32). Arditi points to a number of post-liberal characteristics that do not replace the neo-liberal state, “but rather aim at transforming liberal democratic polities by including non-liberal forms of participation and citizenship” (2008: 72–80, cited in Wolff, 2013: 32). Nancy Postero has suggested that the agenda of the Morales government in Bolivia is not only about instigating post-neoliberalism, “but also about transforming, or ‘vernacularising’, liberalism” (2010: 59–78, cited in Wolff, 2013: 32). Bolivia and Ecuador have indeed rewritten their Constitution in ways that should offer new constitutional resources to indigenous and campesino populations (Bebbington and Bebbington, 2011: 135). Sousa Santos (2010: 30–31) has further identified the emerging situation in Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador as the result of an “enrichment” of representative democracy with participatory and communitarian forms. Accordingly, Grugel and Riggirozzi define post-neoliberalism as an attempt to reinforce the direction and the purpose of the economy through state spending, increased taxation and management of exports combined with a project of enhancing citizenship through a new politics of cultural recognition with Bolivia and Ecuador, and attempts to recreate the state-sponsored pact between business and labour in Argentina (2012: 5) as examples. On the other hand, in a comparison of the socio-economic, political and cultural transformations in the three Latin American countries mentioned above, Arturo Escobar (2010) traces post-liberalism, as well as post-developmentalism and post-capitalism, but resolves that such “contemporary political changes point towards alternative forms of modernisation, not alternatives to modernity” (Wolff, 2013: 32).

Overall, therefore, the concept of post-neoliberalism that was formulated based on the political, social and economic development in some of the Latin America countries highlights changes in several realms: an extension of welfare and welfare rights, an increase in state intervention in economy, and a more participatory democracy to varying extends in different countries. We regarded this conceptual haziness in the formulation of post-neoliberalism as an opportunity to rethink whether or not possible alternatives to neoliberalism were emerging in another geographical setting: Asia, a region which seems to pose a challenge to neoliberal globalisation in the first place, especially because of its developmentalist past that is generally characterised by a “selective protection of domestic markets from foreign import competition; domestic control over the capital market; and aggressive industrial policies to upgrade manufacturing and generate export strength” (Hill, 2007).

The industrial developmentalism was not an individual country phenomenon in Asia, but a regional one “in which a tripartite hierarchy of core, semiperiphery, and periphery was created in the first part of the 20th century and then slowly recreated after World War 11” (Cumings, 1984: 38). As a matter of