

Neoliberalising Cambodia: The Production of Capacity in Southeast Asia

By Jonathon Louth

Friday 7th of March 2014

Abstract:

The current Cambodian experience of re-integration into the regional and global economies reveals a process of violent neoliberal accumulation. Under the guise of clean, frictionless neoclassical economics, neoliberalism has reformulated the role of state and society. This paper examines how notions of 'capacity' or 'capacity-building' reflect a commitment to this understanding of economic systems. Market building and deepening, which involve the expansion and regulation of capacity, are intrinsically tied to this commitment. I consider how technocratic, administrative and pseudo-scientific discursive acts (and other similar ways of 'speaking') are central to the production and reproduction of the neoliberal agendas. In presenting this argument I am looking at the role of international financial institutions, the Cambodian state, civil society groups and governance structures more generally. Importantly, I conclude that the whole process of producing space and capacity is not a neat and linear set of affairs. The world of abstractions and dominant discursive acts cannot completely subsume the lived experience of the everyday. Even within the most repressive confines there is an opportunity for everyday lives to resist and to consider alternatives.