

LOÏC WACQUANT

## Three steps to a historical anthropology of actually existing neoliberalism

The anthropology of neoliberalism has become polarised between a hegemonic economic model anchored by variants of *market rule* and an insurgent approach fuelled by derivations of the Foucaultian notion of *governmentality*. Both conceptions obscure what is ‘neo’ about neoliberalism: the reengineering and redeployment of the state as the core agency that sets the rules and fabricates the subjectivities, social relations and collective representations suited to realising markets. Drawing on two decades of field-based inquiries into the structure, experience and political treatment of urban marginality in advanced society, I propose a *via media* between these two approaches that construes neoliberalism as an *articulation of state, market and citizenship* that harnesses the first to impose the stamp of the second onto the third. Bourdieu’s concept of bureaucratic field offers a powerful tool for dissecting the revamping of the state as stratification and classification machine driving the neoliberal revolution from above and serves to put forth three theses: (1) neoliberalism is not an economic regime but a political project of state-crafting that puts disciplinary ‘workfare’, neutralising ‘prisonfare’ and the trope of individual responsibility at the service of commodification; (2) neoliberalism entails a rightward tilting of the space of bureaucratic agencies that define and distribute public goods and spawns a Centaur-state that practises liberalism at the top of the class structure and punitive paternalism at the bottom; (3) the growth and glorification of the penal wing of the state is an integral component of the neoliberal Leviathan, such that the police, courts and prison need to be brought into the political anthropology of neoliberal rule.

**Key words** neoliberalism, market, governmentality, bureaucratic field, penal state, workfare, prisonfare, urban marginality, Bourdieu

Some 20 years ago I embarked on a series of field-based inquiries into the structure, experience and political treatment of urban poverty in advanced society, centred on the fate of the black American ghetto after the ebbing of the Civil Rights movement and on the devolution of the working-class peripheries of the Western European metropolis, as exemplified by the decline of France’s Red Belt *banlieues* under the press of deindustrialisation. I carried out ethnographic observation amidst the utter desolation of Chicago’s historic South Side and in the defamed housing projects of La Courneuve, against the backdrop of the dualising landscape of outer Paris. And I deployed the tools of analytic comparison to puzzle out the rise of a new regime of ‘advanced marginality’ propelled by the fragmentation of wage labour, the recoiling of the social state and the spread of territorial stigmatisation. I had no inkling then that this research on the predicament of the *Urban Outcasts* of the new century (Wacquant 2008a) would take me from the streets of the hyperghetto deep into the bowels of America’s gargantuan carceral system, and thence to the vexed issue of neoliberalism and state-crafting on a global scale (Wacquant 2009a). In this paper, I briefly retrace this

intellectual journey from the micro-ethnography of the postindustrial precariat to the macrosociology of the neoliberal Leviathan at century's dawn to propose theses for a *historical anthropology of actually existing neoliberalism*.

To elucidate the determinants and modalities of relegation in the American metropolis at century's close, I had to find a way around two major epistemological obstacles: the coalescing scholarly myth of the 'underclass', that new subcategory of the black poor said to ravage the inner city, and the long-standing trope of 'disorganisation' inherited from the ecological school of urban sociology (see Wacquant 1996 and 1997 for thorough critiques of these two notions). To circumvent them, I carried out fieldwork on the life strategies of young African-American men in Woodlawn, a section of the vestiges of Chicago's 'Bronzeville' (Drake and Cayton 1993 [1945]). Through a series of circumstances narrated elsewhere, I became a member of a local boxing gym, learned the craft of prizefighting and used the club as a springboard to venture out into the neighbourhood (Wacquant 2004 [2000]) and reconstruct my grasp of the ghetto from the ground up and from the inside out.<sup>1</sup>

Drawing up the lifestories of my ring mates, I soon discovered that nearly all of them had passed through jail or done time in prison so that, to make sense of their trajectories, I had to understand the 'great penal leap backward' that turned the United States from a beacon of progressive penalty in the 1960s to the world leader in incarceration and global exporter of aggressive crime control policies by the 1990s (Wacquant 2009b). Mapping America's carceral boom after 1973, it became clear that the accelerating retraction of social welfare, leading to the infamous 'welfare reform' of 1996, and the explosive expansion of criminal justice were two convergent and complementary shifts toward the punitive regulation of racialised poverty; that disciplinary 'workfare' and castigatory 'prisonfare' supervise the same dispossessed and dishonoured populations destabilised by the dissolution of the Fordist–Keynesian compact and concentrated in the disparaged districts of the polarising city; and that putting the marginalised fractions of the postindustrial working class under stern tutelage guided by moral behaviourism offers a prime theatrical stage onto which governing elites can project the authority of the state and shore up the deficit of legitimacy they suffer whenever they forsake its established missions of social and economic protection.

This was confirmed in the 1990s when one Left government after another across Western Europe elevated battling street crime to the rank of national priority in the very urban zones where social insecurity and spatial taint were deepening along with the normalisation of joblessness and precarious employment. Tracking the international travels of 'zero tolerance' policing and assorted penal slogans and nostrums 'made in the USA' (the so-called broken windows theory of crime, mandatory minimum sentences, boot camps for juvenile offenders, plea bargaining, etc.) further revealed a distinctive pattern of sequential diffusion and functional interlock whereby policies of economic deregulation, supervisory workfare and punitive criminal justice tend to trek and blossom together (Wacquant 2011). In sum, the *penalisation of poverty* emerged as a core element of the domestic implementation and transborder diffusion of the neoliberal project, the 'iron fist' of the penal state mating with the 'invisible hand' of the market in conjunction with the fraying of the social safety net. What started as an inquiry into the everyday predicament of the urban precariat at ground level in inner

1 See Wacquant (2009c) for a retrospective dissection of the analytic linkages and biographical cogs between 'The body, the ghetto, and the penal state'.

Chicago and outer Paris thus ended with the theoretical conundrum of the character and constituents of neoliberalism on a planetary scale.

## Market rule versus governmentality

How, then, does this intellectual peregrination suggest that we handle the slippery, hazy and contentious category of neoliberalism –some of its most astute analysts call it a ‘rascal concept’ in anxious search of analytic specificity and legitimacy?<sup>2</sup> Whereas Hilgers (2011) portrays the anthropology of neoliberalism as organised in a triadic configuration formed by cultural, governmentality and systemic approaches (see also Hoffman *et al.* [2006] and Richland [2009] for alternative mappings), I see it as *polarised* between a hegemonic economic conception anchored by (neoclassical and neo-Marxist) variants of *market rule*, on the one side, and an insurgent approach fuelled by loose derivations of the Foucaultian notion of *governmentality*, on the other. These two conceptions have spawned rich and productive research agendas but they suffer from mirror defects: the one is exceedingly narrow, shorn of institutions and verges on the apologetic when it takes the discourse of neoliberalism at face value; the other is overly broad and promiscuous, overpopulated with proliferating institutions all seemingly infected by the neoliberal virus, and veers toward critical solipsism. For the former, neoliberalism is the straightforward imposition of neoclassical economics as the supreme mode of thought and the market as the optimal yet inflexible contraption to organise all exchanges (e.g. Jessop 2002; Saad-Filho and Johnston 2005); for the latter, it is a malleable and mutable political rationality that mates with many kinds of regimes and insinuates itself in all spheres of life, with no firm outside ground on which to stand to oppose it (e.g. Barry *et al.* 1996; Brown 2005). Curiously, these two conceptions converge in obscuring *what is ‘neo’ about neoliberalism*, namely, the *remaking and redeployment of the state* as the core agency that actively fabricates the subjectivities, social relations and collective representations suited to making the fiction of markets real and consequential.

The dominance of the economic, nay economicist, conception of neoliberalism is well established (e.g. Campbell and Pedersen 2001; Edelman and Haugerud 2005; Gamble 2001; Cerny 2008). For the vast majority of advocates and critics alike, the term designates the resurgent ‘empire of capital’, to evoke the title of Ellen Meiksins Wood’s (2005) historical-materialist reconstruction of the succession of land-based, commercial and capitalist projects of imperial rule, the latter being distinctive in that it seeks to impose market imperatives not only on all territories but also on all human activities. This reigning view equates neoliberalism with the idea of the ‘self-regulating market’ and portrays the state as locked in a zero-sum, adversarial relationship with it. Logically and historically, the coming of ‘market fundamentalism’ implies the retrenchment, withdrawal or recusal of the state, portrayed either as an impediment to efficiency

2 ‘Since the 1980s, a perplexing mix of overreach and underspecification has accompanied the troubled ascendancy of the concept of neoliberalism in heterodox political economy. The concept has become, simultaneously, a terminological focal point for debates on the trajectory of post-1980s regulatory transformations *and* an expression of the deep disagreements and confusions that characterise those debates. Consequently, ‘neoliberalism’ has become something of a *rascal concept* – promiscuously pervasive, yet inconsistently defined, empirically imprecise and frequently contested’ (Brenner *et al.* 2010: 183–4).

or as a mere instrumentality serving to boost the regained supremacy of capital. Thus, according to Colin Crouch (1997: 358), the concurrent decline of the manual working class, rise of financial capital, spread of new technologies of communication, and liberalisation of economic flows across national borders have ushered in a ‘short-termist, pure-market, constraint free form of capitalism’. The emerging ‘terms of the neoliberal consensus’ include the ‘universal abandonment of Keynesian policies’ and bring about ‘the hollowing out of the state and privatising of more and more of its functions’ (Crouch 1997: 357, 359). Similarly, for David Harvey, ‘neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices’ (2005: 3–4). The turn to neoliberalism entails the triadic combination of ‘deregulation, privatisation, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of provision’. In practice, states deviate from the doctrinal template of ‘small government’ only to foster a business-friendly climate for capitalistic endeavours, to safeguard financial institutions and to repress popular resistance to the neoliberal drive toward ‘accumulation by dispossession’.

Much anthropology of neoliberalism consists of transporting this schema to different countries around the globe or taking it to the continental scale to capture the cultural trappings of, and social reactions to, market rule (e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; Greenhouse 2009). Latin America is a favourite, followed by the countries of the former Soviet bloc and Africa. In his sweeping account of ‘Africa in the neoliberal world order’, James Ferguson typically characterises neoliberalism as the simultaneous retraction of the state and extension of the market: ‘In keeping with the economic philosophy of “neoliberalism”, it was preached that removing state “distortions” of markets would create the conditions for economic growth, while rapid privatization would yield a flood of new private capital investment’ (Ferguson 2006: 11). Here the notion is synonymous with the economic measures of ‘structural adjustment’ ‘supposed to roll back oppressive and overbearing states and to liberate a new vital “civil society” that would be both more democratic and more efficient economically’ (Ferguson 2006: 38–9). It is a cover term pointing to the social changes wrought by, popular recalcitrance and everyday adaptations to, the austerity and privatisation programmes otherwise known as ‘The Washington Consensus’ (Williamson 1993).

Against this ‘neat’ view of neoliberalism as a coherent if not monolithic whole, students of governmentality propound a ‘messy’ view of neoliberalism as a flowing and flexible conglomeration of calculative notions, strategies and technologies aimed at fashioning populations and people.<sup>3</sup> Through this optic, neoliberalism is not an economic ideology or policy package but a ‘generalized normativity’, a ‘global

3 This view derives from Foucault’s writings and 1978–1979 lecture course at the Collège de France on *The birth of biopolitics* (Foucault 2004), which have inspired a general research programme on ‘governmentality’ as the art of shaping populations (subjection) and the self (subjectification). The terms ‘postsocial governance’, ‘advanced liberal’ and ‘late liberal’ are often used as synonyms for neoliberal (see Dean [1999] for an overview and O’Malley *et al.* [2006] for a paradoxical defence of a theoretical approach that disavows itself as such). There is no room here to address the problems in Foucault’s own formulations of governmentality and neoliberalism (starting with their idealist cast), and of their mating, let alone to assess their derivations and relevance to historical changes that unfolded after Foucault’s passing.

rationality' that 'tends to structure and organize, not only the actions of the governing, but also the conduct of the governed themselves' and even their self-conception according to principles of competition, efficiency and utility (Dardot and Laval 2007: 13). Governmentality scholars insist that mechanisms of ruling are not located in the state but circulate throughout the society, as well as across national borders. Accordingly, they work transversally to track the spread and concatenation of neoliberal techniques for the 'conduct of conduct' across manifold sites of self-production, including the body, the family, sexuality, consumption, education, the professions, urban space, etc. (Larner 2000). They are also fond of highlighting contingency, specificity, multiplicity, complexity and interactive combinations (made wondrous by the new Deleuzian-sounding catchword of 'assemblages'): there is not one big-N Neoliberalism but an indefinite number of small-n neoliberalisms born of the ongoing hybridisation of neoliberal practices and ideas with local conditions and forms. This approach is taken to an extreme by Aihwa Ong in her influential collection of essays *Neoliberalism as exception* in East Asia, in which she proposes to 'study neoliberalism not as a "culture" or a "structure" but as mobile calculative techniques of governing that can be decontextualized from their original sources and recontextualized in constellations of mutually constitutive and contingent relationships' (Ong 2007: 13).

The analytic impulse to extend beyond the state and to cut across institutional domains is fruitful, as is the notion that neoliberalisation is a productive, rather than a subtractive, process spilling over from the economy. But to locate this process in the migration of 'malleable' technologies of conduct that are constantly 'realigned' and 'mutating' as they travel is problematic. First, it is unclear what makes a technology of conduct neoliberal: certainly, such bureaucratic techniques as the audit, performance indicators and benchmarks (favourites of the neo-Foucauldian anthropology of neoliberalism) can be used to bolster or foster other logics, as can actuarial techniques. Similarly, there is nothing about norms of transparency, accountability and efficiency that makes them necessary boosters to commodification: in China, for instance, they have been rolled out to pursue patrimonial goals and to reinscribe socialist ideals (Kipnis 2008). The trouble with the governmentality approach is that its working characterisation of neoliberalism as 'governing through calculation' (Ong 2007: 4) is so devoid of specificity as to make it coeval with any minimally proficient regime or with the forces of rationalisation and individuation characteristic of Western modernity *in globo*.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, as technologies of conduct 'migrate' and 'mutate', neoliberalism is found to be everywhere and nowhere at the same time. It becomes all process and no contents; it resides in flowing form without substance, pattern or direction. In the end, then, the governmentality school gives us a conception of neoliberalism just as thin as that propounded by the economic orthodoxy it wishes to overturn.

4 If neoliberalism is an array of 'calculative technologies' originating in the economy and migrating to other domains of social life, then its birth dates back to 1494 with the invention of double-entry book-keeping (Carruthers and Espeland 1991), and the grand theorist of neoliberalism is not Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich von Hayek or Milton Friedman but Max Weber (1978 [1918–20]: 85–113, 212–26) for whom the ascendancy of instrumental rationality has set the West apart from the rest – all the more so since Weber places great emphasis on the related notion of *Lebensführung*, 'life conduct', in his comparative sociology of religion.

## Neoliberalism as market-conforming state crafting

I propose to chart a *via media* between these two poles, one that recognises that, from its intellectual incubation by the Colloque Lippman in Paris in 1938 and the transnational ‘thought collective’ anchored by the Société du Mont-Pélerin after 1947 (Denord 2007) to its various historical incarnations during the closing decades of the 20th century to its paradoxical reassertion after the financial crisis of autumn 2008, ‘neoliberalism has always been an open-ended, plural and adaptable project’ (Peck 2008: 3), but that it nonetheless has an *institutional core* that makes it distinct and recognisable.<sup>5</sup> This core consists of an *articulation of state, market, and citizenship* that harnesses the first to impose the stamp of the second onto the third. So all three of these institutions must be brought into our analytic ambit. I diverge from market-centred conceptions of neoliberalism in that I prioritise (political) means over (economic) ends; but I part with the governmentality framework in that I prioritise state-crafting over technologies and non-state logics, and I focus on how the state effectively redraws the boundaries and tenor of citizenship through its market-conforming policies. Accordingly, I recommend that we effect a triple shift to anchor the anthropology of neoliberalism, understood not as an invasive economic doctrine or migrating techniques of rule but as a concrete political constellation: from a ‘thin’ economic conception centred on the market to a ‘thick’ sociological conception centred on the state that specifies the institutional machinery involved in the establishment of market dominance and its operant impact on effective social membership. I contend that Bourdieu’s (1994 [1993]) little-known concept of *bureaucratic field* offers a flexible and powerful tool for understanding the remaking of the state as stratification and classification machine that is driving the neoliberal revolution from above. This shift can be spelled out in three theses.

*Thesis 1: Neoliberalism is not an economic but a political project; it entails not the dismantling but the reengineering of the state*

This is for three basic reasons. First, markets everywhere are and have always been political creations: they are price-based systems of exchange that follow rules that must be set up and refereed by robust political authorities and supported by extensive legal and administrative machineries, which in the modern era equates with state institutions (Polanyi 1971 [1957]; Fligstein 1996; McMillan 2003). Second, as demonstrated by social history and elaborated by social theory running from Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss to Karl Polanyi and Marshall Sahlins, social relations and cultural constructs necessarily underpin economic exchanges and people typically chafe under market sanctions: the state must thus step in to overcome opposition and rein in strategies of evasion. Third, the historiography of the transnational *Geistkreis* that spawned it is explicit that, from its origins in the crisis of the 1930s, neoliberalism has endeavoured not to restore late 19th-century liberalism but to overcome the latter’s flawed conception of the state (Denord 2007; Mirowski and Plehwe 2009). Neoliberalism originates in

5 This is a logical requirement: for diversified local species of neoliberalisms to emerge through ‘mutation’, there must be a common genus they all derive from. It follows that any conception of multiple ‘Small-n neoliberalism’ necessarily presupposes some ‘Big-N Neoliberalism’, if implicitly; and any peripheral and partial instantiation of the phenomenon can be characterised as such only by reference, overt or covert, to a more complete original core.

a double opposition, on the one side, to collectivist solutions (first socialist and later Keynesian) to economic problems and, on the other, to the minimalist and negative vision of the ‘watchman state’ of classic liberalism. It wishes to reform and refocus the state so as to actively foster and bolster the market as an ongoing political creation.<sup>6</sup>

Elsewhere I have characterised this neoliberal reengineering as the articulation of four institutional logics (Wacquant 2010a):

- (i) Commodification as the extension of the market or market-like mechanisms, based on the notion that such mechanisms are universally optimal means for efficiently allocating resources and rewards.
- (ii) Disciplinary social policy, with the shift from protective welfare, granted categorically as a matter of right, to corrective workfare, under which social assistance is made conditional upon submission to flexible employment and entails specific behavioural mandates (training, testing, job search, and work even for subpoverty wages, but also curtailing fertility, abiding by the law, etc.)
- (iii) Expansive and pornographic penal policy aimed at curbing the disorders generated by diffusing social insecurity in the urban zones impacted by flexible labour and at staging the sovereignty of the state in the narrow window of everyday life it now claims to control.
- (iv) The trope of individual responsibility as motivating discourse and cultural glue that pastes these various components of state activity together.

This conception goes beyond the market rule perspective in that it grants a dynamic role to the state on all four fronts: economic, social, penal and cultural. To consider just the first two, the state actively *re-regulates* – rather than ‘deregulates’ – the economy in favour of corporations (Vogel 1996) and engages in extensive ‘corrective’ and ‘constructive’ measures to support and extend markets (Levy 2006) for firms, products and workers alike. On the social front, government programmes thrust onerous obligations onto welfare recipients and aggressively seek to redress their behaviour, reform their morals, and orient their life choices through a mix of cultural indoctrination, bureaucratic oversight and material suasion (Hays 2003), turning social support into a vector of discipline and the right to personal development into an obligation to work at precarious jobs (Moreira 2008). This thick conception of neoliberalism as organisational quadruped also provides hard institutional contents to the soft notion of ‘political rationality’ invoked by the Foucaultians by specifying the means employed by the state to widen and sustain commodification in the face of personal reticence and collective evasion or opposition.

6 This point is stressed by François Denord (2007) and by Jamie Peck (2010: 3), who unearths a little-known early text by Milton Friedman (published in 1951 only in Swedish) in which the Chicago economist explains: ‘The fundamental error in the foundation of 19th-century liberalism [was that it] gave the state hardly any other task than to maintain peace, and to foresee that contracts were kept. It was a naïve ideology. It held that the state could only do harm [and that] laissez-faire must be the rule.’ Against this view, the ‘doctrine [of] neoliberalism’ asserts that ‘there are truly positive functions allotted to the state’, among them to secure property rights, prevent monopoly, ensure monetary stability and (most remarkably), ‘relieve acute poverty and distress’. Peck is correct in noting that ‘neoliberalism, in its various guises, has always been about the capture and re-use of the state, in the interests of shaping a pro-corporate, free-trading “market order”’ (2009: 9), but he stops short of endogenising the recurrent institutional means whereby the state effects this shaping.

*Thesis 2: Neoliberalism entails a rightward tilting of the bureaucratic field and spawns a Centaur-state*

If the state is not being ‘withdrawn’ or ‘hollowed out’ but indeed rebuilt and redeployed, how are we to grasp this revamping? This is where Bourdieu’s (1994 [1993]) concept of bureaucratic field, construed as the set of organisations that successfully monopolise the definition and distribution of public goods, proves pivotal.<sup>7</sup> A major virtue of this notion, painstakingly constructed through a historical analysis of the multisecular transition from the dynastic to the bureaucratic mode of reproduction of rule, anchored in the growing potency of institutionalised cultural capital (see Bourdieu 2012), is to remind us that ‘the state’ is not a monolith, a coherent actor (whether operating autonomously or as the diligent servant of the dominant), or a single lever liable to being captured by special interests or movements springing from civil society. Rather, it is a *space of forces and struggles* over the very perimeter, prerogatives and priorities of public authority, and in particular over what ‘social problems’ deserve its attention and how they are to be treated.

Bourdieu (1998 [1993]) further suggests that the contemporary state is traversed by two *internal* battles that are homologous with clashes roiling across social space: the vertical battle (between dominant and dominated) pits the ‘high-state nobility’ of policy-makers smitten with neoliberal notions, who wish to foster marketisation, and the ‘low-state nobility’ of executants who defend the protective missions of public bureaucracy; the horizontal battle (between the two species of capital, economic and cultural, vying for supremacy within) entangles the ‘Right hand’ of the state, the economic wing that purports to impose fiscal constraints and market discipline, and the ‘Left hand’ of the state, the social wing that protects and supports the categories shorn of economic and cultural capital. In *Punishing the poor*, I adapt this concept to bring into a single analytic framework the punitive shifts in welfare and penal policies that have converged to establish the ‘double regulation’ of advanced marginality through supervisory workfare and castigatory prisonfare. And I add the criminal justice arm – the police, the courts, the prison and their extensions: probation, parole, judicial data bases, civil and bureaucratic liabilities attached to criminal sanctions, etc. – as a core component of the Right hand of the state, alongside the Treasury and the Economics ministry (Wacquant 2009a: 3–20, 304–13).

Using this schema, one can diagram neoliberalism as the systematic tilting of state priorities and actions from the Left hand to the Right hand, that is, *from the protective (feminine and collectivizing) pole to the disciplinary (masculine and individualizing) pole of the bureaucratic field*. This proceeds through two complementary but distinct routes: (i) the transfer of resources, programmes and populations from the social to the

7 Bureaucratic field is one of three concepts Bourdieu forges to rethink rulership; it must not be confounded with the political field (with which it intersects) and the field of power (within which it is located). See Wacquant (2005: 13–18) for an explication of their relations and Wacquant (2010a) for a reworking of bureaucratic field geared to specifying the character of the neoliberal state. In Mudge’s astute characterisation, neoliberalism has three faces, the intellectual (a doctrine), the bureaucratic (state policies of liberalisation, deregulation, privatisation, depolitisation and monetarism), and the political (struggles over state authority), which ‘share a common and distinctive ideological core: the elevation of the market over all other modes of organization’ (2008: 705). But she puts an unsustainable analytic burden on the political field, instead of deploying bureaucratic field as the primary site within which the battle over the missions and means of public action is waged.



penal wing of the state (as when mentally ill patients get ‘deinstitutionalised’ with the closing of hospitals and ‘reinstitutionalised’ in jails and prisons after transiting through homelessness); (ii) the colonisation of welfare, healthcare, education, low-income housing, child services, etc., by the panoptic and disciplinary techniques and tropes of the Right hand (as when public hospitals favour budgetary over medical concerns in their internal organization and schools put the reduction of juvenile truancy and classroom violence ahead of pedagogy and hire security guards instead of psychologists). This double rightward skewing of the structure and policies of the state is emphatically *not* the product of some mysterious systemic imperative or irresistible functional necessity; it is the structurally conditioned but historically contingent *outcome of material and symbolic struggles*, waged inside as well from outside the bureaucratic field, over the responsibilities and modalities of operation of public authority (Wacquant 2009a: xix–xx, 67–9, 108–9, 312–13). It follows that the velocity, magnitude and effects of this institutional torque will vary from country to country, depending on its position in the international order, the makeup of its national field of power and the configuration of its social space and cultural divisions.

As a result of this rightward slanting, the neoliberal Leviathan resembles neither the minimalist state of 19th-century liberalism nor the evanescent state bemoaned by economic and governmentality critics of neoliberalism alike, but a *Centaur-state that displays opposite visages at the two ends of the class structure*: it is uplifting and ‘liberating’ at the top, where it acts to leverage the resources and expand the life options of the holders of economic and cultural capital; but it is castigatory and restrictive at the bottom, when it comes to managing the populations destabilised by the deepening of inequality and the diffusion of work insecurity and ethnic anxiety. Actually existing neoliberalism extolls ‘laissez faire et laissez passer’ for the dominant, but it turns out to be paternalist and intrusive for the subaltern, and especially for the urban precariat whose life parameters it restricts through the combined mesh of supervisory workfare and judicial oversight.

***Thesis 3: The growth and glorification of the penal wing of the state are an integral component of the neoliberal Leviathan***

Caught up in the ideological vision that pictures it as ushering the end of ‘big government’, social analysts of neoliberalism have overlooked the stunning rehabilitation and stupendous expansion of the penal apparatus of the state that have accompanied the wave of market dominance. Belying the prophecies, made between 1945 and 1975 by mainstream penologists and radical theorists of punishment alike, that it was a discredited organisation bound to wither away (Tonry 2004), the prison has made a spectacular comeback to the institutional forefront across the First and Second Worlds over the past three decades. With precious few and partial exceptions (Canada, Germany, Austria and parts of Scandinavia), incarceration has surged in all the post-industrial societies of the West, ballooned in the post-authoritarian nations of Latin America, and exploded in the nation-states issued from the collapse of the Soviet bloc as they transitioned from command to market economy. The carceral stock has not only risen rapidly in all three regions (Walmsley 2011) along with the precarisation of work and the retrenchment of welfare; it is everywhere composed disproportionately of the urban poor, ethnic and national outsiders, the homeless and the derelict mentally ill, and assorted rejects from the labour market (Wacquant 2009a: 69–75).

The relentless rise in the carceral population is moreover only one crude, surface manifestation of the expansion and exaltation of the penal state in the age of the triumphant market. Other indicators include the aggressive deployment of the police in and around neighbourhoods of relegation and the increased recourse to the courts to handle unruly behavior and minor offenses; the widening of the judicial net through alternative sanctions, post-custodial schemes of control and the exponential development of digitalised justice data banks; the mushrooming of administrative retention centres to corral and expel irregular migrants; the hyperactivity of legislatures on the criminal front (they have multiplied and hardened penal sanctions at a clip never before witnessed) and the boom of a media sector trading on catastrophic images of criminal danger; the promotion of crime-fighting on the streets to the top of the government agenda (even as corporate offending was being actively decriminalised) and the salience of ‘insecurity’ in electoral campaigns; and the bending of penal policy to emotive and symbolic parameters, in overt disregard for penological expertise.

The bolstering and broadening of the penal sector of the bureaucratic field are not a response to crime, which has declined in Western countries over the past two decades and generally fluctuates without connection to levels and trends in punishment (Young and Brown 1993; Lappi-Seppälä 2011). They are also not the spawn of the coming of the ‘exclusive society’, the ascent of a ‘culture of control’ or the decline of trust in government and deference in the ‘risk society’,<sup>8</sup> and even less so the creature of profit-seeking operators, as in the activist demonology of the ‘prison-industrial complex’ (Wacquant 2010b). The pumping up of the penal institution is one *brick in the building of the neoliberal Leviathan*. This is why it correlates closely, not with the vague ‘ontological anxieties’ of ‘late modernity’, but with specific market-enforcing changes in economic and social policy that have unleashed class inequality, deepened urban marginality and stoked ethnic resentment while eroding the legitimacy of policy makers. Upon examining trends in a dozen advanced societies distributed among four types of political economy, Cavadino and Dignan report ‘a general tendency for *changes* in these countries’ punishment levels over time [fitting] the same pattern’: ‘as a society moves in the direction of neo-liberalism, its punishment becomes harsher’ (2006: 450). Reworking the same data from a different angle, Lacey (2008: 111) reveals, in spite of her wish to undercut the thesis of penal convergence, that the best predictor of the incarceration rate for these countries is the ‘degree of coordination’ of the economy, that is, a reverse index of neoliberalisation. Lappi-Seppälä’s (2011: 303) statistical analysis of 30 European countries confirms that penal moderation finds its roots in ‘consensual and corporatist political culture, in high levels of social trust and political legitimacy, and in a strong welfare state’ (2011), that is, in sociopolitical features antinomic to neoliberalism. Moreover, the temporal and geographic pattern of diffusion of punitive and pornographic penalty across the globe tracks the spread of policies of economic deregulation and welfare disciplining (Wacquant 2009b, 2011).

It is not by happenstance that the United States turned superpunitive after the mid-1970s just as labour was precarised, welfare support was rolled back, the black ghetto imploded and poverty hardened in the dualising metropolis. It is not by chance that Chile became the leading incarcerator of Latin America in the early 1980s and the United Kingdom the penal locomotive of the European Union in the late 1990s as

8 As proposed, respectively, by Jock Young (1999), David Garland (2001), and John Pratt (2007) and Jonathan Simon (2007), to flag the main contending macrotheories of recent penal change.

they veered from clientelist-corporatist to neoliberal state-crafting. For there exists a deep structural and functional connection between market rule and punishment after the close of the Keynesian-Fordist era.<sup>9</sup> The penal state has been rolled out in the countries that have ridden the neoliberal road because it promises to help resolve the two dilemmas marketisation creates for the maintenance of the social and political order: (1) it curbs the mounting dislocations caused by the normalisation of social insecurity at the bottom of the class and urban structure; and (2) it restores the authority of the governing elite by reaffirming ‘law and order’ just when this authority is being undermined by the accelerating flows of money, capital, signs and people across national borders, and by the constricting of state action by supranational bodies and financial capital. The concept of bureaucratic field helps us capture these twinned missions of punishment insofar as it direct us to pay equal attention to the material and symbolic moments of public policy – here, to the instrumental role of class disciplining and the communicative mission of projecting sovereignty that criminal justice assumes.<sup>10</sup> It also invites us to move from a repressive to a productive conception of penalty that stresses its performative quality (Wacquant 2008b), such that we can discern that the increased budgets, personnel and precedence given to the policing and judicial organs in all the societies transformed by neoliberalism as economic programme are not a heresy, an anomaly, or a transitional phenomenon, but integral components of the neoliberal state.

To advance a historical anthropology of neoliberalism as it actually evolves in the countries where it has taken root – as opposed to how it portrays itself (the market rule model) or how it dissipates when it fails to crystallise into a coherent regime (the governmentality model) – we must acknowledge that it pertains to the register of *state formation*. Much like the ‘long sixteenth century’ saw the birth of the modern Leviathan in Western Europe (Ertman 1997), including the invention of poor relief and the penal prison, as part of the rocky transition from feudalism to mercantilist capitalism, our own century’s turn has witnessed the fashioning of a novel kind of state that purports to enshrine markets and embrace liberty, but in reality reserves liberalism and its benefits for those at the top while it enforces punitive paternalism upon those at the bottom. Instead of viewing the police, the court, and the prison as technical appendages for fighting crime, we must recognise that they constitute core political capacities through which the Leviathan governs physical space, cuts up social space, dramatises symbolic divisions and stages sovereignty. And so we must bring them to the centre of a renewed political anthropology of rule capable of capturing how the state marks out and manages problem territories and categories in its quest to make markets and to mould citizens who conform to them, whether they like them or not.

9 This is where I part with Bernard Harcourt (2011), who roots this connection in the 18th-century invention of the paired myths of the ‘free market’ and the ‘diligent police’: the expansive penal state is the distinct creation of *neo*-liberalism, and not an inheritance from or resurgence of classic liberalism. It emerges *after* the Fordist–Keynesian period because the latter has decisively altered the institutional parameters of, and collective expectations about, state activity (for elaborations, see Wacquant 2009a: 227–8).

10 It follows that, to properly conceptualise the penal state, we must not only repatriate criminal justice to the core of political anthropology. We must also put an end to the mutual hostility (or deliberate ignorance) between the two strands of criminology, the Marxist and the Durkheimian, that have elaborated the material and the symbolic logics of punishment in isolation from, and even in opposition to, each other.

## Acknowledgements

This paper grew out of the discussion following my keynote address to the Conference on ‘Marginalité, pénalité et division ethnique dans la ville à l’ère du néolibéralisme triomphant: journée d’études autour de Loïc Wacquant’, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Brussels, 15 October 2010. I am grateful to Mathieu Hilgers, the Laboratoire d’anthropologie des mondes contemporains, the Institut de sociologie, and the Groupe d’études sur le racisme, les migrations et l’exclusion for a lively day of debates; to Aaron Benavidez for outstanding research and library assistance; and to Megan Comfort, François Denord, Zach Levenson, and Dylan Riley for perspicacious editorial and analytical suggestions.

*Loïc Wacquant*  
*Department of Sociology*  
*University of California, Berkeley*  
*Berkeley, CA 94720, USA*  
*loic@berkeley.edu*

## References

- Barry, A., T. Osborne and N. Rose (eds.) 1996. *Foucault and political reason: liberalism, neo-liberalism, and rationalities of government*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bourdieu, P. 1994 [1993]. ‘Rethinking the state: on the genesis and structure of the bureaucratic field’, *Sociological Theory* 12: 1–19.
- Bourdieu, P. 1998 [1993]. ‘The abdication of the state in *The weight of the world: social suffering in contemporary society*, 181–8. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. 2012. *Sur l’État*. Paris: Seuil and Raisons d’agir Editions.
- Brenner, N., J. Peck and N. Theodore 2010. ‘Variegated neoliberalization: geographies, modalities, pathways’, *Global Networks* 10: 182–222.
- Brown, W. 2005. ‘Neoliberalism and the end of liberal democracy’. in *Edgework: critical essays on knowledge and politics*, 37–59. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Campbell, J. and O. Pedersen (eds.) 2001. *The rise of neoliberalism and institutional analysis*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Carruthers, B. G. and W. Nelson Espeland 1991. ‘Accounting for rationality: double-entry bookkeeping and the rhetoric of economic rationality’, *American Journal of Sociology* 97: 31–69.
- Cavadino, and J. Dignan. 2006. ‘Penal Policy and Political Economy’, *Criminology and Criminal Justice* 6, no. 4 (November): 435–456.
- Cerny, P. G. 2008. ‘Embedding neoliberalism: the evolution of a hegemonic paradigm’, *The Journal of International Trade and Diplomacy* 2: 1–46.
- Comaroff, J. and J. L. Comaroff (eds.) 2001. *Millennial capitalism and the culture of neoliberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Crouch, C. 1997. ‘The terms of the neoliberal consensus’, *The Political Quarterly* 68: 352–60.
- Dardot, P. and C. Laval 2007. *La Nouvelle raison du monde. Essai sur la société néolibérale*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Dean, M. 1999. *Governmentality: power and rule in modern society*. Sage: London.
- Denord, F. 2007. *Néo-libéralisme version française. Histoire d’une idéologie politique*. Paris: Démopolis.
- Drake, St. C. and H. Cayton 1993 [1945, 1962, 1969]. *Black metropolis: a study of negro life in a northern city*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Edelman, M. and A. Haugerud (eds.) 2005. *The anthropology of development and globalization: from classical political economy to contemporary neoliberalism*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Ertman, T. 1997. *Birth of the Leviathan: building states and regimes in medieval and early modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Ferguson, J. 2006. *Global shadows: Africa in the neoliberal world order*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Fligstein, N. 1996. 'Markets as politics: a political-cultural approach to market institutions', *American Sociological Review* 61: 656–73.
- Foucault, M. 2004. *Naissance de la biopolitique. Cours au Collège de France, 1978–1979*. Paris: Seuil/Gallimard.
- Garland, D. 2001. *The culture of control: crime and social order in contemporary society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Greenhouse, C. J. (ed.) 2009. *Ethnographies of neoliberalism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Gamble, A. 2001. 'Neoliberalism', *Capital & Class* 25: 127–34.
- Harcourt, B. E. 2011. *The illusion of free markets: punishment and the myth of the natural order*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Harvey, D. 2005. *A brief history of neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hays, S. 2003. *Flat broke with children: women in the age of welfare reform*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hilgers, M. 2011. 'The three anthropological approaches to neoliberalism', *International Social Science Journal* 61: 351–64.
- Hoffman, L., M. DeHart and S. J. Collier 2006. 'Notes on the anthropology of neoliberalism', *Anthropology News* 47 (6): 9–10.
- Jessop, R. 2002. 'Liberalism, neoliberalism, and urban governance: a state-theoretical perspective', *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (July): 452–472.
- Kipnis, A. B. 2008. 'Audit cultures: neoliberal governmentality, socialist legacy, or technologies of governing?', *American Ethnologist* 35: 275–89.
- Lacey, N. 2008. *The prisoners' dilemma: political economy and punishment in contemporary democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lappi-Seppälä, T. 2011. 'Explaining imprisonment in Europe', *European Journal of Criminology* 8: 303–28.
- Larner, W. 2000. 'Neo-liberalism: policy, ideology, governmentality', *Studies in Political Economy* 63: 5–26.
- Levy, J. D. (ed.) 2006. *The state after statism: new state activities in the age of liberalization*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- McMillan, J. 2003. *Reinventing the bazaar: a natural history of markets*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Meiksins Wood, E. 2005. *Empire of capital*. London: Verso.
- Mirowski, P. and D. Plehwe (eds.) 2009. *The road from Mont Pelerin: the making of the neoliberal thought collective*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Moreira, A. 2008. *The activation dilemma: reconciling the fairness and effectiveness of minimum income schemes in Europe*. London: The Policy Press.
- Mudge, S. L. 2008. 'State of the art: what is neo-liberalism?', *Socioeconomic Review* 6: 703–31.
- O'Malley, P., N. Rose, and M. Valverde 2006. 'Governmentality', *Annual Review of Law & Social Science* 2: 83–104.
- Ong, A. 2006. *Neoliberalism as exception: mutations in citizenship and sovereignty*. Durham: Duke University Press Books.
- Ong, A. 2007. 'Neoliberalism as a mobile technology', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 32: 3–8.
- Peck, J. 2008. 'Remaking Laissez-faire', *Progress in Human Geography* 32: 3–43.
- Peck, J. 2010. *Constructions of neoliberal reason*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Polanyi, K. [1957] 1971. 'The economy as instituted process', in G. Dalton (ed.), *Primitive, Archaic and Modern Economies*, 139–174. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Pratt, J. 2007. *Penal populism*. London: Routledge.
- Richland, J. B. 2009. 'On neoliberalism and other social diseases: the 2008 sociocultural anthropology year in review', *American Anthropologist* 111: 170–6.
- Saad-Filho, A. and D. Johnston (eds.) 2005. *Neoliberalism: a critical reader*. London: Pluto.
- Simon, J. 2007. *Governing through crime: how the war on crime transformed American democracy and created a culture of fear*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Tonry, M. H. 2004. 'Has the prison a future?', in M. H. Tonry (ed.), *The future of imprisonment*, 3–25. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vogel, S. K. 1996. *Freer markets, more rules: regulatory reform in advanced countries*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Wacquant, L. 1996. 'L"underclass" urbaine dans l'imaginaire social et scientifique américain', in S. Paugam (ed.), *l'Éclusion: l'état des savoirs*, 248–62. Paris: Editions La Découverte.
- Wacquant, L. 1997. 'Three pernicious premises in the study of the American ghetto', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 21–2: 341–53.
- Wacquant, L. 2004 [2000]. *Body and soul: notebooks of an apprentice boxer*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wacquant, L. (ed.) 2005. *Pierre Bourdieu and democratic politics: the mystery of ministry*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Wacquant, L. 2008a. *Urban outcasts: a comparative sociology of advanced marginality*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Wacquant, L. 2008b. 'Ordering insecurity: social polarization and the punitive upsurge', *Radical Philosophy Review* 11: 9–27.
- Wacquant, L. 2009a. *Punishing the poor: the neoliberal government of social insecurity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Wacquant, L. 2009b. *Prisons of poverty*. Revised and expanded edition. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Wacquant, L. 2009c. 'The body, the ghetto and the penal state', *Qualitative Sociology* 32: 101–29.
- Wacquant, L. 2010a. 'Crafting the neoliberal state: workfare, prisonfare and social insecurity', *Sociological Forum* 25: 197–220.
- Wacquant, L. 2010b. 'Prisoner reentry as myth and ceremony', *Dialectical Anthropology* 34: 604–20.
- Wacquant, L. 2011. 'The global firestorm of law and order: on neoliberalism and punishment', *Thesis Eleven* 105: in press. [Followed by a comment by Pat O'Malley and a response.]
- Walmsley, R. 2011. *World prison population list*, 9th edn. London: International Center for Prison Studies.
- Weber, M. 1978 [1918–20]. *Economy and society: an outline of interpretive sociology*, 2 vols. G. Roth and C. Wittich (eds.). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Williamson, J. 1993. 'Democracy and the "Washington Consensus"', *World Development* 21: 1329–36.
- Young, W. and M. Brown 1993. 'Cross-national comparisons of imprisonment', *Crime & Justice: A Review of Research* 17: 1–49.
- Young, J. 1999. *The Exclusive Society: Social Exclusion, Crime and Difference in Late Modernity*. London: Sage.