The Ontological Politics of (In-)Equality: Exploring the Global Education-Development Industry and Alternatives to Commercialised Education in India

by Mr Christoph Andreas NEUSIEDL (Presenter 1, 3:00 - 3:45 pm)
PhD Candidate, Department of Asian International Studies

ABSTRACT: My research aims to make sense of the current onslaught of capitalist-neoliberal development and the myriad, already existing alternatives to neoliberal development as a form of ontological politics, centred around the notion of equality and the vastly differing understandings of the latter. Looking at this through the lens of ‘education,’ glorified as the silver bullet to bring about development, I will argue that the globalised, modern education system in general, and its adaptation in the Indian context in particular, is based on the ontological politics of inequality which takes away people’s capacity to lead meaningful lives. Opposed to that I will explore alternatives to (mainstream) education in India as a form of the ontological politics of equality, based on what contemporary French philosopher Jacques Rancière calls the presupposition of equal intelligence. As I am going to demonstrate, these alternatives not only shake up our limited and flawed common-sense understanding of education but relatedly lead to an urgently needed re-thinking and un-learning of our ideas of ‘development’ and what it means to lead meaningful lives in times of the multiple and ever-intensifying economic, environmental, spiritual, political, cultural and social crises that large parts of humanity are facing.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER: Christoph Neusiedl is a PhD Candidate at the Department of Asian and International Studies (AIS), City University of Hong Kong (CityU). His areas of interest include post-development, political ontology and pluriversal studies, post-anarchism and political philosophy, with a focus on South Asia. Since starting his PhD at CityU, Christoph discovered his passion for the idea of un-learning and wants to explore alternatives to commercialised Education.

Goodbye Washington, Hello Beijing? In Search of a New Development Model for South America

by Ms Gabriela Sofia NUNEZ WONG (Presenter 2, 3:45 - 4:30 pm)
PhD Candidate, Department of Asian International Studies

ABSTRACT: This research seeks to enrich the debate on the level of autonomy of weak peripheral economies in world order. It argues that China’s finance in Brazil, Venezuela, and Ecuador has provided an alternative to these weak peripheral countries to redefine their development strategy. China’s diversification of financial assets has turned into an alternative source of finance for these developing countries, allowing them to play off the neo-liberal model that has governed the development strategy since the 1980s, and an alternative development strategy sponsored by Chinese loans. While these developing countries have built new state assets through Chinese loans, they have been experiencing a pendulum that goes back and forth from an alternative model of development to neo-liberalism, showing the prevailing force of Wall Street, and the power of the US in the financial system.

Different approaches to state theory (relative autonomy of the state) and development theory (neoliberalism) will be used to explain why these South American countries have had more room to follow an alternative model of development from neo-liberalism and build state capacity, and how Chinese loans may impact the future development strategy of these developing countries.

Empirically, on the one hand, I seek to assess the development strategies of these South American countries through increasing state control over its strategic sectors and state capacity building as an adopted model sponsored by Chinese financing. Also, I evaluate China’s use of its financial assets to securitize commodities, to increase of M&As between Chinese SOEs and South American SOEs, and the increase of hefty loans-for-oil agreements. I also seek to observe China’s method to access state assets of these developing countries. It is expected to see a growing expansion of Chinese exports of the country’s overcapacity. On the other hand, it is also expected to observe increasing pressure from the US through the BITs, showing that the financial power of the US still prevails in the international system, and partial privatizations after the busts of the commodities super cycle.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER: Gabriela Nunez Wong is a second-year doctoral student in the Department of Asian and International Studies at the City University of Hong Kong. She earned her Master of Arts (Dis) in International Studies at the same department in 2016. She is a member of the Hong Kong Association of University Women since 2017. She has worked as a Middle School Lecturer in the First School of Anhui province, and as Corporate Trainer in the Fortune 500 Maersk (马士基) based in Chengdu, China.