

公共藝術中的新帝國主義在為急進的經濟擴張開路



The neo-imperialist function of public art is to clear a path for aggressive economic expansion

Hewitt&Jordan+Beech

Global Imbalances

An extract from Andrew Glyn's book *Capitalism Unleashed*

It is now widely acknowledged that the increasing international integration and liberalization of the past decades has ushered in an era of turbulence and uncertainty in the global economy. The growth and fragility of financial markets, the impact of their excesses upon real economies, the disruptive effects of China's dramatic rise, the scale of America's foreign debt and the effects of intensifying competition on national labour markets all point to continuing instability in the decades ahead.

World uncertainties

The genie of financial competition and expansion has been released by deregulation. Whilst the worst effects of the resulting fragility have been felt in the Asian countries hit by the crisis of 1998 it would be wrong to assume that the greater sophistication of financial markets in Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries insures them against such problems. The real economies of the US and Japan have been scarred by financial excesses and

the whole system can be threatened by the unrelenting search for 'value' through ever more complex financial trades.

Regulatory attempts to reap the benefits of liberalization whilst limiting the risks face formidable difficulties, and the chances of a major global financial crisis have surely increased. Dwarfing in significance even the rise in density, international entanglement and fragility of financial markets is the growth of China, India and other developing countries.

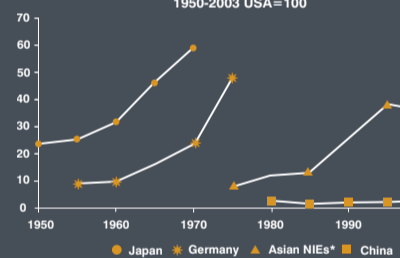
Until the 1980s the developing countries were economically significant for the rich economies only as suppliers of commodities, above all oil. The North never ran large enough export surpluses with the South for these to constitute a substantial factor in maintaining demand at home, as Rosa Luxemburg had suggested. Developing countries never posed a serious competitive threat to Northern producers. However, these countries are now 'emerging' on to the world economic stage with great momentum.

Since the mid 1990s the majority of world gdp has been produced outside the old OECD countries and their share is declining. The centre of capital accumulation, the driving force of the system, is shifting away from the old core countries. For the North this has a number of quite contradictory effects.

Firstly, rapid growth in the rest of the world will bring buoyant demand for exports of those goods in which the OECD countries maintain an advantage. This in turn encourages capital accumulation in those industries and helps to keep aggregate demand rising. In order to maintain that advantage in the face of rising competition from the South in increasingly sophisticated products, core country currencies would have to depreciate. This would reduce real incomes in the OECD countries as they would no longer be importing such cheap consumer goods.

Secondly, there is the impact of surplus labour in China and elsewhere, significant segments of which will be highly educated

Figure 4.7 Manufacturing wages during catch-up, 1950-2003 USA = 100



NB: Each point shows wages in the country or countries in the year in question as a percentage of US wages in that same year

*Asian Newly Industrializing Economies

but with far lower wages than in the North. Access to this cheap labour could encourage a much higher level of Foreign Direct Investment from the North, creating an investment drain away from the core zone. On a world scale the capital/labour ratio would decline by a third or more, as the vast reserves of labour in those countries become inserted into the global economy. The result could be a major fall in the share of wages in the OECD countries as workers find their bargaining position weakened. But wages of course play a dual role in capitalism, both as cost of production and as source of mass consumer demand.

With investment attracted elsewhere by Southern wages, maintaining buoyant demand in the North would rely on increasing dollops of consumer credit or expanded government spending. Such a pattern looks unstable economically, if not risky politically. Although the emergence of new low-cost sources of supply is not a novel phenomenon, with China and India in many respects following the path of Japan

and then the Asian Newly Industrializing Countries, what makes the present position different is that the massive populations of these countries offer the potential for a far larger, and thus more disruptive, process of catch-up.

China itself could be a further major source of instability. Its credit system is notoriously shaky, raising the possibility of a financial crisis and recession that could have a severe impact on the North. The rate of absorption of labour could generate wage pressure and industrial conflict, which the Chinese Communist Party would find it difficult to restrain. China's appetite for energy and materials could precipitate spiralling prices, as markets try to anticipate long-run trends. A severe recession could develop in China as a result of a credit crunch and overaccumulation.

Much slower growth for a period seems inevitable in the US if the unsustainable balance-of-payments deficit is to be righted, but this will only worsen the budgetary position until taxes are

increased. It is one of the paradoxes of the recent past that, despite the instabilities of the financial system and disruption caused by shifts in world trade, the economies of the rich countries have suffered smaller output fluctuations over the past decade than in any comparable period.

The variability of output is one third less than it was in the rapid growth period of the 1960's or in the stagnant 1970's and the same is true of the developing countries as well. Indeed the present imbalances in the world economy could still be absorbed with a 'soft landing' and relatively little disruption. But so long as a major dollar crisis, some other triggering event which exposes global financial fragility, or a serious interruption to China's growth remain on the cards, the capitalist system in the North finds itself peering into a highly uncertain future.

Capitalism Unleashed is published by Oxford University Press.

The Neo-Imperial Function

Hewitt&Jordan+Beech

Birmingham - Guangzhou - Birmingham

Curated by Gavin Wade for Public Structures a special project for the Second Guangzhou Triennial BEYOND: an extraordinary space of experimentation for modernization which was curated by Hou Hanru, Hans Ulrich Obrist and Guo Xiaoyan.

The neo-imperial function is the latest in a series of text works entitled The Functions of Public Art by Hewitt&Jordan+Beech. Previous works in the series are: The Aesthetic Function of Public Art (Venice Biennale 2005); The Economic Function of Public Art; The Function of Public Art for Regeneration; and, The Social Function of Public Art. Each work in the series uses changes in site, scale and form to extend the critical potential of the statement.

The neo-imperial function is a text work in Mandarin. The work is sequential, comprising of three phases, in two cities, over two months. The project began in Barford Street, Birmingham UK as a text work presented on a billboard. A photograph of this billboard was made into a new poster and displayed in the city of Guangzhou. The Guangzhou poster in its new site was again photographed and exhibited at the Guangzhou Triennial. This image was then returned to the original site in Birmingham. It is in this way that the work mimics the mechanisms of production and consumption that occurs in industrial, commercial and cultural relations between the UK and China.

Guangzhou and Birmingham are twinned cities. The function of public art in these relations is tied to commercial enterprise and the hope of establishing

or maintaining an advantage in an economy shaped by global asymmetries. For this reason the text for the neo-imperial function is meant to be always out of place – not fully at home and therefore not giving advantage clearly to one culture or another.

Site 1: Barford Street, Digbeth, Birmingham UK (7 - 20 November 2005)
Site 2: Guangzhou City & The Second Guangzhou Triennial (18 November -15 January 2006)
Site 3: Barford Street, Digbeth, Birmingham UK (7- 20 December 2005)

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