

# The Public-Private Hybridization of the 21st Century State

**Workshop Chair:** Ronnie D. Lipschutz, University of California, Santa Cruz

**Location:** Odets

**Time:** 9 AM - 5 PM, Feb. 14, 2009

## Workshop Summary:

Over the past three decades, the privatization of public functions and services has become a growing and standard government practice. This phenomenon has been attributed to the neoliberal turn as well as the fiscal crisis of the state. It has also been adduced by some to involve a major transfer of power and authority from the public to the private sphere, contributing to a loss of state sovereignty, and by others as purely a new capitalist accumulation strategy. We believe such accounts are incorrect. Empirical evidence suggests that, far from undermining the state, neoliberalism, globalization and privatization—what we call “public-private hybridization”—have actually strengthened the state.

In this project, we argue that such hybridization can be better explained as a combination of political strategy and structural change that is neither a short-term phenomenon nor a reorganization of capital's influence over the state nor a consequence of the “rise of global civil society.” Rather, we hypothesize that hybridization represents a reorganized form of governmental rule and authority, both within states and among them. Moreover, rather than signifying a “decline of the state,” this process serves to maintain or even reassert state sovereignty. Our hypotheses and research agenda draw upon two, concrete real-world observations. The first is that, notwithstanding 35 years of ascendant neoliberalism, the state remains a formidable political entity that shapes, constrains and modifies the behavior of non-state entities. The second centers on the fact that hybridization is profoundly altering the terms of political life, in democratic as well as authoritarian societies.

By examining these, and related, contemporary developments through rigorous empirical case studies, analysis and theorizing, and investigating the intent and capacities behind hybridization, we hope to determine whether old categories of political economy will be uprooted and what this process can tell us about world politics and economics in the 21st century.

The project's research objectives include: (1) development of a historically-based theoretical framework to locate public-private hybridization in the long sequence of capital-state transformations; (2) development of a set of empirical case studies to illuminate the “best” to “worst” outcomes of this transformation; (3) assessments of comparative state strategies (e.g., U.S. vs. PRC) that serve to illustrate alternative trajectories; and (4) a normative evaluation of new state-market-society relationships in order to highlight the various political implications of hybridization in the 21st century.

This group of 13-15 contributors will meet three times in 2009-10 (New York, a second location, and New Orleans), to compare research, write paper drafts, present papers on conference panels, and compose one or more edited volumes, as well as journal articles and papers suitable for inclusion in the ISA Compendium Project.

## Workshop Participants:

- Shelley Hurt, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
- Ulrich Brand, Univ. of Vienna
- Phillip Cerny, U of Rutgers-Newark
- Sandra Halperin, Royal Holloway—U. London
- Rebecca Hester, UC-Santa Cruz
- Béatrice Hibou, Sciences Po
- Shelley Hurt, Dartmouth University
- Anna Leander, Copenhagen Business School
- David Levi-Faur, Hebrew University
- Ronnie D. Lipschutz, UC-Santa Cruz
- Iver Neumann, Oslo University
- Ole Jacob Sending, Norwegian Institute of Int'l Affairs
- Linda Weiss, Univ. of Sydney

ISA Workshop Observer Registration has closed.