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# Rethinking power and institutions in the shadows of neoliberalism (An introduction to a special issue of World Development)

Prakash Kashwan [a,*], Lauren M. MacLean [b], Gustavo A. García-López [c]

[a] Department of Political Science, University of Connecticut, United States
[b] Department of Political Science, Indiana University Bloomington, United States
[c] Graduate School of Planning, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico

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ABSTRACT

Despite the recognition that institutions matter for international development, the debates over institutional reforms tend to obscure the role of power. Neoliberal models of development are often promoted in terms of their technical merits and efficiency gains and rarely account for the multiple ways that social, economic and political power shape institutional design and institutional change. Even recent efforts to address power tend to conceptualize it too narrowly. This special issue seeks to rethink the role of power in institutional creation and change in the context of persistent neoliberalism. In the introduction, we synthesize the literature on the nature of power to develop a new conceptual framework – a power in institutions matrix – that highlights the multiple dimensions of power involved in institutional development and change. We argue that such a theoretically-informed mapping of power in institutions will enable scholars, practitioners, and citizen groups to go beyond the standard critiques in order to analyze the multifaceted effects of neoliberal institutional change. Our introduction draws on an extensive literature review as well as the special issue contributors who examine institutional change in a variety of policy sectors in Africa, South Asia, Latin America, and North America. We find that a range of diverse local, national and transnational actors, with disparate access to power, negotiate institutional changes from above and below through overt imposition of and resistance to new rules, influence of agendas, and promotion of discourses. Neoliberalism thus creates a new distributive politics. The special issue thus offers a theoretically-grounded approach for linking international and domestic power differences to the process of institutional change, with a specific focus on equity and sustainability. In a departure from the current literature's focus on elite bargains, we showcase the efforts by less powerful groups to gain a foothold in decision-making processes.

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## 1. Introduction

Neoliberalism has long shadows. While many previous development models have been rejected and dismissed (Hirshman, 1982; Hoadley, 1981), the neoliberal development paradigm has persisted longer than any other, dominant for nearly four decades, despite significant contestation and challenges around the world (Harvey, 2005; Peck, Theodore, & Brenner, 2012; Della Porta, 2017). Springer, Birch, and MacLeavy (2016, p. 1) claim at the outset of their volume that: "Neoliberalism is easily one of the most powerful concepts to emerge within the social sciences in the last two decades…" Indeed some speak of a 'zombie' neoliberalism that is ideologically exhausted – even economists from the IMF recognize its failures (Ostry, Loungani, & Furceri, 2016) – but still somehow endures (Aalbers, 2013; Bruff, 2014). Neoliberalism has always been associated with demands for far-reaching changes in the structures, institutions, and norms governing the political economy of development processes from local to global levels. Yet, the institutional forms and development outcomes of neoliberalism remain a hotly debated issue (Grzanka, Mann, & Elliott, 2016). Scholars and practitioners continue to disagree about which institutions matter and to what ends (Dimova & Savoia, 2016).

Some critics have contended that neoliberalism, as practiced on the ground, is so variegated that it is not useful to even invoke the term (cf. Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009). Nothing is gained, however, by not naming neoliberalism, and not recognizing its long shadows. Ferguson (2006) has employed the metaphor of shadows to suggest that neoliberal globalization 'hops and skips' across spaces

* Corresponding author at: Department of Political Science, University of Connecticut, 365 Fairfield Way, Storrs, CT 06269, United States.

*E-mail addresses:* Prakash.kashwan@uconn.edu (P. Kashwan), macleanl@indiana.edu (L.M. MacLean).

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in Africa. Neoliberalism is certainly not monolithic in any geographic region, but an ideology of neoliberalism persists globally, that often underlies the diversity of institutional, structural and discursive changes around the world.

To be sure, the meanings of neoliberalism and its associated institutional reforms have changed over time. David Harvey has defined neoliberalism as 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 characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). In the early 1980s, at the beginning of the neoliberal era, development practitioners and policymakers seemed to call for a simple retrenchment of state institutions (World Bank, 1981). What became known as the 'Washington Consensus' aimed to reduce what was perceived as harmful government intervention in order to allow market institutions to operate freely; the goal was to 'get prices right' (Williamson, 1990). As such, the 'standard prescription' of institutional changes often included currency devaluation, trade liberalization, elimination of public subsidies, reduction in state spending, privatization, and the decentralization of administrative structures.

By the 2000s, the new consensus was that 'getting institutions right' was the essential cornerstone for development (e.g., World Bank, 2001, 2005, 2016, 2017). For example, Paul Collier (2007) argued that preferential trade policies, new laws against corruption, and new international charters were needed to lift 'the bottom billion' out of poverty. After the 2008 global financial crisis, neoliberal policies shifted to a 'deep marketization' focusing on institutional changes that could create new markets or expand existing ones (Carroll & Jarvis, 2015). Neoliberalism was no longer articulated as retrenchment but, rather, new institutional creation across all aspects of society: a series of "new political, economic, and social arrangements within society that emphasize market relations, re-tasking the role of the state, and individual responsibility…the extension of competitive markets into all areas of life, including the economy, politics, and society" (Springer et al., 2016, p. 2). The embedding of neoliberalism in transformed state institutions commits states to future neoliberal reforms, to the point that neoliberalization becomes a state logic rather than an actual policy choice, continually strengthening the power of corporate sectors (Cadhill, 2014). Generally, these institutional changes have been promoted based on their technical merits with little discussion of power. The focus has been on 'rule of law', private property rights, and pro-market reforms, with the narrow objective of generating economic growth, without substantive attention to other types of institutions, or to equity and sustainability-related outcomes.

Only very recently have scholars turned to the questions of exclusion and inequality. For example, Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) argued that nations failed to achieve prosperity when they lacked inclusive political and economic institutions. They conceptualize institutions at the societal-level, i.e., constitutions, electoral laws, and property rights, with a strong emphasis on path dependence: "Different patterns of institutions today are deeply rooted in the past because once society gets organized in a particular way, this tends to persist" (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012, pp. 43–44). Ironically, while the authors use the United States as the paradigmatic example of how inclusive institutions drive prosperity, they neither acknowledge the country's marked income and racial inequalities nor the mobilizations of the Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter movements.[1] In contrast to Acemoglu and Robinson, Piketty (2014) has focused explicitly on the patterns of wealth inequality over time, contending that structural changes in tax policy in developed countries – implemented as part of neoliberal reforms in the 1980s – is leading toward 'patrimonial capitalism' where wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few elites (2014, pp. 237–238). Oxfam's yearly reports (Alvaredo, Chancel, Piketty, Saez, & Zucman, 2017) further document the extreme and growing global inequality, while showing that government action is key to addressing these changes.

Increased attention to the questions of economic inequality has recently prompted the World Bank to acknowledge the role of inequalities and 'power asymmetries' (World Bank, 2016, 2017, pp. 7–8), but, these are conceptualized rather narrowly without connecting the economic and non-economic spheres. While inequality is conceptualized exclusively as income inequality, power asymmetry is located exclusively in social and political arenas. Economic actors and institutions of markets remain innocent of the power asymmetries that are linked to processes of exclusion, elite capture, and clientelism in politics and society. Other scholars highlight the importance of what they term 'political settlements' (Khan, 2010; Hickey, Sen, & Bukenya, 2015; Kelsall 2016) for understanding the dynamics of development. Yet, much of this work (with important exceptions) draws on game theoretic models of behavior and thus simplifies political relations as dyadic interactions between elite groups.

Hence, the renewed attention to 'institutions' in this neoliberal context has left several unanswered questions: How do power relations inform the goals of this more recent neoliberal project of reform? And how do existing institutions intersect with the neoliberal project to produce new sets of power relations and development outcomes? We highlight how an enduring technocratic framing of institutional reforms removes from view important dynamics of contestation and conflict over the meanings, avenues, ends, and outcomes of development. This special issue aims to rethink the importance of power in institutional analysis of international development in the shadows of neoliberalism. Our introduction draws on an extensive literature review as well as the special issue contributors who examine institutional change in a variety of policy sectors in Africa, South Asia, Latin America, and North America.

Institutions facilitate development in that they reduce transaction costs, and increase efficiency overall. But, in this special issue, we call attention instead to the importance of thinking about both equity and sustainability. These are fundamentally different development goals requiring different approaches to institutional reform, and in particular, a different lens on power relations. A focus on *equity* points to the importance of distributional consequences between different groups. A focus on *sustainability* highlights the distributional consequences of specific patterns of resource use by different groups over time. An emphasis on understanding and addressing the distributional consequences, in turn, prompts us to prioritize questions of power and power relations over the attention in much of the present scholarship on appropriate institutional design.

The special issue editors and the contributors have either been part of or have engaged with, the scholarship emerging from the Bloomington school of institutional analysis established by Elinor and Vincent Ostrom. Several of the special issue participants established a working group on 'Power and Institutions' and took part in conversations at several workshops and conferences focused on these questions. Equally important, many of us have worked in the trenches of international development, which has undoubtedly shaped the kind of questions we pursue here. In particular, many of us now study the intersections of development and the environment, an area that has been neglected within the literature on institutional reforms, and yet, has received global attention from

[1] Neither inequality nor race is included in the book's index for the US while caste is prominently included for India. Power is also not featured in the index of their book.

policymakers and politicians with the near-universal ratification of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.[2] The special issue participants thus tend to deploy the Bloomington school's flare for conceptually-oriented praxis, but go beyond its emphasis on institutions as artifacts of cooperative bargaining. This special issue builds on the previous attempts by some Bloomington school scholars who show that the inequalities inherent to social and political hierarchies as well as power asymmetries within 'local communities' influence institutional design and outcomes (see, Agrawal & Ribot, 1999; Agrawal & Gibson, 1999; Clement, 2010; MacLean, 2010a; Kashwan, 2016).

We argue that institutions are inseparable from power. By integrating multiple dimensions of power more rigorously into our institutional approach, we can expand our understanding of development institutions and produce new insights about the political process of development over time. Rather than privileging 'local' governance (Blair, 2000), or institutional design aimed at building state capacities (Andrews, Pritchett, & Woolcock, 2017), we unpack the complex and contingent political dynamics that shape the governance of development more broadly (see, Harriss, Hunter, & Lewis, 1995). We take a more critical perspective on decentralized forms of governance, revealing how even informal institutions and norms may be transformed over time by historical legacies of state-building (MacLean, 2010b) and embedded in broader national and transnational structures of power (Li, 2007, 2010). Instead of assuming that individuals are inevitably burdened by predatory states, or liberated by institutions that free markets, we examine how individuals or groups act–acquiesce, adapt, or resist collectively – in this era of accelerated neoliberal globalization. We reveal how people navigate their engagements and resistance as citizens of multiple, overlapping communities embedded in specific social (power) relations and institutional arrangements. We also show how environmental sustainability and equity are at the center of contestations over institutional change. This attention to the finer workings and effects of power in institutions contributes to our understanding of the role that actors and agencies in the state, society, and markets play in the ongoing struggles over development.

In the next section, we examine the previous efforts to engage with questions of power and inequality in the international development literature. In the third section, we draw insight from the theoretical debates on the nature of power to develop a new conceptual framework, which we call a power in institutions matrix. This framework reveals multiple dimensions of power and how they shape institutional creation and change. In the fourth section, we provide an overview of each of the contributing papers, highlighting their engagement with different types of power. In the fifth section, we demonstrate how employing a broader, multi-dimensional conceptualization of power can enrich our institutional analysis of international development. By bridging these two separate bodies of literature on power and institutions, we shed light on several key dilemmas and themes in development. Finally, in the conclusion, we synthesize the findings from the collection as a whole, pointing to the policy significance of this research as well.

## 2. The misconception of power in current development scholarship

Over the past three decades, scholars from the new institutional economics, historical institutionalism, and new sociological institutionalism have worked to conceptualize and theorize institutions and institutional change. Despite the differences in underlying assumptions, these scholars agree that institutions matter. Many contemporary scholars now routinely define institutions as the "the rules of the game" that shape the "opportunities and constraints individuals face" in any given situation (North, 1990; Ostrom, 2005, p. 5). These include not only formal rules but also informal institutions and norms (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004; Ostrom, 2005).

Where these scholars may disagree is on the role of power in institutions and institutional change. Much of the new institutional economics (NIE) has either omitted power altogether from their analyses (Dowding, 2008; Moe, 2005) or conceptualized power relatively narrowly as 'bargaining power' between individual actors that is determined by each individual's relative endowment of resources (e.g., economic, informational, positional, etc.) (Knight, 1992). The premise of most NIE approaches is that individuals are rational and autonomous actors with fixed preferences, which determine their decisions to participate voluntarily in creating or changing institutions.

Meanwhile, historical institutionalists and new sociological institutionalists frequently conceptualize power as the ability of groups (e.g., within the state, socioeconomic classes, racial and ethnic groups, etc.) to structure the rules. For example, Schamis (1999) shows how powerful business groups were able to 'hijack' neoliberal reforms in Chile in order to increase their monopoly control over key industries. Similarly, Hadiz and Robison (2005) show how Indonesian political and economic elites cleverly used neoliberal reforms to secure 'illiberal consolidations.' Snyder (1999) highlights how political entrepreneurs in Mexico took advantage of the initial efforts to deregulate agriculture at the national level in order to introduce new regulations that would benefit them at the subnational level. In this view, certain historical junctures are critical (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007), and thus set the stage for path dependency (Pierson, 2004) where institutions become endogenous and are less likely to change, or where change takes place slowly and incrementally (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010).

While the institutionalist literature has continued to grow and has become a major framework of analysis of development problems over the past decades,[3] very few studies have paid adequate attention to the issue of power in institutions. Even very recent efforts to rethink development by incorporating politics more explicitly into the analysis – e.g. Thinking and Working Politically (Leftwich 2011), Doing Development Differently (Kelsall, 2016), Adapting Development (Wild, Booth, Cummings, Foresti, & Wales, 2015), Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (Andrews, Pritchett, & Woolcock, 2013) and Political Settlements Analysis (Khan, 2010) – have tended to conceptualize power too narrowly.[4]

We argue for a broadening of the discussion of power in international development from an overwhelming emphasis on studying the distribution of power among elites and how intra-elite coalitions are negotiated and coordinated (Abdulai & Hickey, 2014; Booth, 2012; Hickey, 2013; Khan, 2010; Kelsall, 2012; Pritchett, Werker, & Sen, 2018). Our survey of the literature suggests that such a narrow view of power relations as elite bargains is driven, to a significant extent, by the methodological inclination to use game theoretic models. The World Bank (2017, p. 18) explicitly explains how their model of politics is derived from game theory, defining it: "the branch of social sciences that studies strategic behavior – to understand the dynamics of power, policy, and

[2] See http://una-gp.org/the-sustainable-development-goals-2015–2030/.

[3] The awarding of the Nobel Prize in Economics to Elinor Ostrom in 2009 spurred renewed attention to the value of institutional analysis despite the experimental turn in the social sciences.

[4] Notably, much of this work has been situated at the intersection of academics and policy and has been carried out in close collaboration with and with support from donors, or "paymasters" as Duncan Green critically refers to them (Green, 2012, http://www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=12453). Kelsall (2016, p. 1) makes the point that much of the political settlements research has also been heavily funded by donors.

reform." Even when the World Bank acknowledges the role of citizen engagement and international influences in policy effectiveness, these relationships are often modeled simplistically using principal-agent theory as dyadic interactions between 'citizens' and 'the state'.

Overall, we identify four major gaps in the existing discussions of power in international development. First, as we suggested above, much of the literature is focused on elite power and inter-elite bargains. The major policy implication of much of this work is that policymakers must adapt to existing political settlements (Kelsall, 2016) rather than attempt to re-engineer or impose an ideal institutional form (World Bank, 2017). For example, the economic interest of different industries and constituencies are at the center of Pritchett et al. (2018, p. 353) recommendation about reorienting development strategies in the developing countries. Interventions to alter power relations are not considered as a possibility. As such, this literature misses the role of mass politics, social movements, and civic associations in placing popular concerns at the center of political and policy processes (see, Bebbington, Dani, Haan, & Walton, 2008; Fox, 2007; Kashwan, 2017).

Second, power is conceived in highly instrumental terms, focused primarily on how institutional changes might threaten or benefit economic resources or political stability (Andrews et al., 2017; Khan, 2010). Even when Hickey (2013) and Abdulai and Hickey (2014) try to address the reductionism of past approaches by incorporating the role of ideology, they are focused narrowly on the ideology of elites as drivers of elite behavior and miss the ideology of citizens or the specific ideologies that inform the policies and programs promoted by international agencies.

Third, the role of history in power relations is reduced, and the renegotiation of bargains among elite groups becomes more of a settled and static equilibrium, where past historical capacity to organize and hold power has enduring influences or 'powerful path dependencies' on current development outcomes (Kelsall, 2016, p. 2; Pritchett et al., 2018). The World Bank model of power relations rightly acknowledges the iterative nature of politics, but the power asymmetries appear to feedback and create long-lasting barriers to institutional reform and innovation. History is essentially baked into earlier institutional bargains and is hence reduced analytically to a less important causal factor, and more of an antecedent condition. Yet, recent work by development economists and political scientists has argued that history of state-building is important in the way that certain types of institutions get established and then shape development trajectories (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2001; Khan, 2010; MacLean, 2010a,b; Slater & Simmons, 2010).

Fourth, despite the wide recognition that global development strategies must account for environmental sustainability, many of the mainstream international development scholars have paid little attention to these questions. The focus is usually on how institutions can foster national economic growth as the main outcome of interest –an argument frequently invoked to justify neoliberal reforms and their intensified resource extractivism. For example, Pritchett et al. (2008, p. 253) recommend 'big' mining and infrastructure projects to "jump-start a country's growth acceleration." In contrast, other scholars have pointed out the social and environmental costs at the subnational level – usually in marginalized communities – thus mining projects are frequently subject to vigorous contests over power in "decision-making, the enactment of values and rights, and the uneven distribution of economic benefits and socio-environmental burdens associated with mining" (Vela-Almeida, Kolinjivadi, & Kosoy, 2018, p. 188). This neglect of the questions of equity and sustainability in the scholarship on institutional reforms in international development is a missed opportunity. Investigating power relations constitutes an important methodological tool, which produces valuable insights about the distributional consequences of competing approaches to natural resource management and economic development.

## 3. Multiple dimensions of power in institutions of international development

In this special issue, we seek to bridge the literature on institutional reforms in international development with the extensive scholarship on power, putting them in the context of neoliberalism. Here, we build on the scholarship of institutionalists who have engaged with theories of power in their work (Agrawal, 2005; Clement, 2010; MacLean, 2010a,b; Kashwan, 2016; Theesfeld, 2009). We also build on the fundamental insight from Elinor Ostrom's work that citizens are capable of designing institutions of collective action to resolve social dilemmas that affect their lives and lifeworlds. Lastly, we integrate insights from political scientists and political economists whose work helps us reveal the relationship between important social and political structures on the one hand, and on the other hand, the agency of groups vested in contesting the status quo (Khan, 2010; Mann, 2008; Poteete, 2009). Theories of power help connect the many apparently disparate variables influencing international development, including transformative socio-ecological changes (Partzsch, 2017). Yet understanding and applying power theories to study these processes is complicated by the frequent focus on a single dimension of power – generally 'power over' (coercion, manipulation) – and the failure to indicate how multiple dimensions relate to one another (Partzsch, 2017). We contend that the theoretical insights from the systematic exploration of power are therefore critical to our conceptualization of institutions and to understand the implications of neoliberal development on the ground.

The dominant conceptualization of power has been actor-centered and focused on domination of powerful actors over less powerful ones. Early work by Dahl (1957, pp. 202–203) focused on a single dimension of power, defined as the ability of A to get B to do something that B would not otherwise do. Recent work on power in development studies, including those using popular tools such as the 'power cube' (Gaventa, 2006), emphasize the power of dominant actors over the subordinate ones (McGee 2016, p. 106; See also, Harris, 2002; Duménil and Lévy, 2011). Notably, the World Bank (2017, p. 3) articulates this basic perspective of 'power over' and cites Dahl and Lukes as theoretical sources for their conceptualization of power. However, not all forms of power may be quite as visible or explicit as Dahl's conceptualization suggests.

Bachrach and Baratz (1962) added the 'mobilization of organizational bias' to control the agenda as a second dimension: keeping certain issues off the table, generating institutions that create benefits for some groups at the expense of others. Steven Lukes added the 'third face' of power, which entails preventing people "from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognition, and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things" (Lukes (1978) 2005, pp. 11, 34). While centered on actors, this three-dimensional theory implicitly recognizes the role of institutions (e.g. agenda-setting and participation rules) and discourses. Recent work shows its value for understanding outcomes of development and environment interventions (Brisbois & de Loe, 2016; Epstein, Bennett. Gruby, Acton, & Nenadovic, 2014; García-López & Arizpe, 2010; Parks, 2018).

Still, a number of scholars have criticized this approach for 'individualizing' the study of power and neglecting its structural dimensions (Boulding, 1990; Hayward, 1998; Hayward & Lukes, 2008; Isaac, 1987). Many of these critiques draw on the work of Michel Foucault, who defines power as a force that flows through society, shapes the discursive construction of ideas as truths, and

is embedded in social structures and institutions. Foucault uses the concepts of governmentality and 'biopower' to refer to the forms in which power manages, controls and shapes the characteristics and actions of individuals and collectives, and of life itself, leading to a self-disciplining of behavior (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). These works show how the discourses of international development shape social practices and meanings of development in line with modernist narratives of order and progress, which excludes certain issues and actors and produce and reproduce unequal power relationships.

Another important conceptualization of power emerges from the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who envisioned power as shaped by everyday interactions in specific institutional and cultural contexts or 'fields'– spaces of social interactions defined by norms/rules, actors with socialized roles, forms of capital (social, economic, cultural), and discourses/knowledges – which generate long-standing practices or 'habitus' (Wilshusen, 2009). Habitus refers to a series of enduring ways of understanding the world and acting upon it that actors develop in response to the objective structural conditions in which they find themselves. The concept of habitus speaks to the institutional effects that manifest via the processes of internalization of norms. Additionally, an understanding of habitus offers a concrete method of imagining how individuals might engage with and shape the process of institutional change, which is often assumed to be driven top-down, or evolve through a sort of invisible hand of markets in social preferences (Beunen & Patterson, 2017). Similarly, while Foucault is criticized for an apparent emphasis on power as dominational force, recent research has shown Foucault's emphasis on resistance and alternatives to domination, institutions, and subjectivities (Haller, Acciaioli, & Rist, 2016).

Political science scholarship presents ways of thinking about the relationship between structural dimensions of power and the agency of actors invested in maintaining or challenging the status quo. One important thread of arguments accounts for the potentials and pitfalls of democratic processes. Mann (2008) has argued that the collective power vested in the institutions of the state provide a measure of distributive power, while a 'mass mobilizing party,' is crucial for competitive engagement of other political parties and pressure groups vying for power. Stable institutionalization of such state-society engagements is central to the mobilization of citizen commitment for the conduct of political affairs of the state (Mann, 2008, p. 356). However, scholars of political settlement would contest such idealized views of state-society engagement. For them, "the balance or distribution of power between contending social groups and social classes, on which any state is based," shapes the nature of politics (di John & Putzel, 2009, p. 4, cited in Pritchett et al., 2018, p. 18). Khan (2010, p. 20) argues that 'political settlements' rest on institutional structures that entail a specific distribution of costs and benefits that mirror the stock of de facto power that different classes and groups wield in a society.

The stock and flow of power in a society is neither static nor immutable. Rather than seeing institutional change in aggregate terms as an overall increase in efficiency and state capacity (Andrews et al., 2017), several scholars have demonstrated how the balance of power is contested in political arenas. Poteete (2009) shows that political coalitions lay the foundation for the development of state and other institutions, but the changes in coalitions, over time, drive changes in policy responses to resource management and economic development, more broadly. Similarly, the work of Schamis (1999) underlines the importance of distributional coalitions in shaping reform outcomes. Kashwan (2017) develops the concept of 'political intermediation mechanisms,' which he defines as well-established processes and relationships that help citizen groups, civil society organizations, and social movements maintain sustained engagement in the political and policy processes that affect them directly.

Yet, it would be unwise to focus too narrowly on domestic political dynamics, and only in the present moment. State policies and institutions are shaped by histories of colonial and post-colonial state making and contemporary forms of globalization. For example, MacLean (2010a,b) argues that divergent histories of state formation not only shape the informal institutions of reciprocity and indigenous notions of citizenship but also influence how local groups and communities choose to engage with the state on an everyday basis.

## 4. The power in institutions matrix

In this section, we develop a matrix that synthesizes how the diverse literatures on power discussed in the previous section might be applied to analyzing the interlinkages between power and institutional change in diverse contexts of international development. The power in institutions matrix we develop here differs from the various typologies of power developed previously (Green, 2008; Lukes, 2005; Mosse, 2005, 2010). Our goal is to make complex social science theories of power accessible to and relevant for development practitioners and citizen groups. We try to achieve this by applying the essence of the multifaceted theories of power to the specific context of institutional change in international development. We highlight how institutional analysis must broaden its lens to consider multiple dimensions of power in order to generate more systematic evaluations of development (Table 1).

The matrix proposes 'power over' and 'power to' as two distinct yet intrinsically related forms of power that may be more or less salient depending on the configuration of actors and institutions in a specific setting. For us the key difference between 'power over' and 'power to' resides in whether power is exerted by *constraining* of the opportunities and control that actors and agencies previously had (power over), or by *creating* new opportunities – i.e. new resources, structures and institutions – and relatively greater control than individuals and groups of individuals enjoyed previously (power to). 'Power to' thus includes resistance and empowerment, as well as learning and cooperation, which can lead to defense/reinforcement of existing institutions, or to institutional innovations or transformations (see Avelino, 2017; Pansardi, 2012; Partzsch, 2017). The integration of these different facets of power into institutional analysis allows us to address both the agentic and structural features of institutions, which often act in conjunction. Instead of associating 'power over' exclusively with more powerful actors and 'power to' exclusively with the subordinate actors, we present them as distinct components within the portfolio of power that all actors and agencies may simultaneously deploy in various combinations. At the same time, we incorporate structural dimensions of power which emanate from broader political-economic forces. Power in this sense is an 'enduring capacity for action' that is 'socially structured' (Isaac, 1987, p. 4). These two dimensions (actors' power and structures) are in constant interaction, mutually constituting each other (Avelino, 2017; Raik, Wilson, & Decker, 2008).

Neoliberal reforms can also have unexpected or contradictory effects on power relations. Decentralization and, in some cases, market interventions, may help the marginalized groups break free from preexisting structures of social powers and open new avenues of participation and influence (Prakash 2010; Ribot and Peluso, 2003). On the other hand, multi-stakeholder participatory forums ostensibly meant for promoting sustainable and socially responsible production, but controlled by actors or agencies with vested interests, may undermine bottom up social mobilization (García-López & Arizpe, 2010). Yet, in many cases, socially

**Table 1**
Power in institutions matrix.

| Power Over (by more powerful actors) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Overt Power: 1st dimension of power | Agenda Power: 2nd dimension of power | Discursive/Ideational Power: 3rd dimension of power |
| Structural/ Institutional Power | *Controlling international finance, investments, and geostrategic decisions via multilateral and multinational global financial institutions* | *Elevating some agendas to public domain, while excluding others in the pursuit of dominant interests* | *Shaping of preferences and values to pre-empt grievances* |
| | EXAMPLES: Structural adjustment programs and austerity programs 'imposed' via the IMF and the World Bank. Voting rules in the board of the governors of the IMF, the World Bank, and the UN Security Council, which give disproportionate power to the representatives of the industrialized countries | EXAMPLES: The dominance of the agenda of economic development understood narrowly as economic growth; prioritizing the agenda of market-based institutional reforms over reforms that expand state interventions | EXAMPLES: Discourses that portray the states as black holes of inefficiency, as opposed to markets that are painted as fountainhead of efficiency and means of promoting meritocracy. Prioritization of institutional status-quo as an indicator of political stability over the more radical goals of reforms that promote inclusive development |
| Power To (by less powerful actors) | | | |
| Subtypes | Overt Power: 1st dimension of power | Agenda Power: 2nd dimension of power | Discursive Power: 3rd dimension of power |
| Cooptation | *Incentivizing behaviors and outcomes desirable to more powerful actors.* | *Crafting and popularizing agendas that appeal to multiple constituencies.* | *Promoting values and discourses germane to the outcomes of interest to dominant actors.* |
| | EXAMPLES: Channeling funds and other resources that are tied to programmatic and policy conditionalities, which reinforce the top-down agendas of the expansion of the sphere of the markets, often at the expense of local political authorities and social mobilization | EXAMPLES: Cleverly deploying popular agendas, e.g. globalization, to pursue political and economic interests of the dominant groups; constructing and deploying social and political identities to serve dominant interests | EXAMPLES: Promoting discourses about the virtues of markets and responsible consumption to foster acceptance, even popularity, of neoliberal interventions among decision-makers at every level |
| Crafting institutions | *Institutional and organizational arrangements that facilitate the participation of previously marginalized constituencies* | *Promoting the agenda of procedural justice and safeguards intended to control unintended consequences* | *Supporting discourses and values promoting institutional pluralism,* i.e. *checks and balances as the central mechanism* |
| | EXAMPLES: Enacting national laws that make it mandatory for governments and corporations to secure rights of indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups, as in the case of India's Forest Rights Act, Mexico's regimes for communal and *ejido* lands, and Indonesia's constitutional court orders about common lands. Civil-society driven local institutions, e.g. labor unions, farmers' cooperatives, and self-help collectives that make use of existing laws | EXAMPLES: Advocating the agenda of context-specific institutional arrangements; addressing social & environmental consequences of market-based processes. e.g., fair trade, social safeguards, and free prior and informed consent | EXAMPLES: Promoting discourses supportive of the devolution of authority, social and economic rights, especially of women and other marginalized groups, and locally-controlled collective enterprises that strengthen local economies |
| Counter-power and Resistance | *Mobilizing socially and politically to mount an overt challenge to the status quo* | *Promoting policy proposals and agendas with the specific goal of countering dominant agendas* | *Sponsoring other- regarding values and discourses to overcome the barriers of collective action* |
| | EXAMPLES: Social and political mobilization to protest top-down imposition of institutions, policies, and programs. Mobilizing against the Narmada dam in India, which forced the World Bank to withdraw; the Zapatista mobilization against NAFTA; and, 350.org-LED movement for divestment from fossil fuels | EXAMPLES: Fostering campaigns of 'de-growth'; 'gross happiness index,' and endorsing the rights of mother earth | EXAMPLES: Endorsing discourses about the virtues of the 'community,' 'local,' 'grassroots,' and 'indigenous,' as opposed to say, the tyranny of neoliberalism |

marginalized groups may look up to the state for assistance in escaping the oppressive social milieus (Bardhan, 2002; Williams, 2004). The complex and dynamic nature of social and political arenas belies any claims about the fixity of power in institutions.

An empirical approach that does not make *a priori* assumptions about the interests of marginalized actors, or about the ability of dominant actors to wield absolute power, is better suited to facilitate a dialogue with scholars of institutional analysis. Ostrom (2005, p. 50) defines the power of an individual in a situation as "the value of opportunity times the extent of control." The power effects of a specific intervention must, therefore, be judged based on whether it opens up new opportunities and enhances the amount of control an actor or group has in the status quo. Having said this, because the workings and the effects of 'power to' have been less developed in the literature (Avelino, 2017; McGee, 2016; Partzsch, 2017) and they are also more complex, we propose the following three subtypes: *cooptation from below, counter-power and resistance, and crafting institutions.*

### 4.1. Cooptation from below

More powerful actors and agencies may create new opportunities for participation or may offer relatively greater control with the goal of coopting actors currently in a subjugated position. However, these effects may neither be coincidental nor always meant to be liberating, as, for instance, shown in critical studies of decentralized and participatory environment and development initiatives (Williams, 2004; Ribot, Agrawal, & Larson, 2006;

McGee, 2016). More powerful actors often exercise such power by authorizing narrowly focused technocratic assessments and forging opportunistic alliances to induce compliance among national and local actors (Li, 2007, pp. 263, 284). We call this form of power 'cooptation from below', in which 'below' signifies the agency that the previously subjugated actors exercise in signing on to the projects that result in cooptation. While cooptation normally conjures images of dominant actors, less powerful actors' advocacy groups may also deploy similar strategies to coopt dominant actors, as we discuss below. They may tactically put together material and discursive elements that are most likely to allow them to negotiate effectively with dominant groups in the interest of advancing a cause (Li, 2000; Jung, 2008; Mayes, Richards, & Woods, 2017).

### *4.2. Counter-power and resistance*

Resistance movements galvanize grassroots energies to overcome barriers to collective action and challenge existing institutions, development projects and pervasive injustices. In many cases, they also forge transnational alliances with resistance groups of similar inclination. Such alliances could produce 'boomerang' effects, thereby enabling movements to secure greater leverage within domestic political and policymaking processes (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). We depart from much of the 'resistance scholarship' (for a detailed discussion, see McGee, 2016) in that we do not necessarily presuppose an exclusively antagonistic relationship between neoliberalism and resistance movements. As the success of the online and real world mobilization organized by 350.org to demand fossil fuel divestments suggest, the flow of ideas and social media through transnational corporations may also greatly contribute to large-scale resistance (Seidman, 2015).

### *4.3. Crafting institutions*

The power of citizens to organize and craft collective bottom-up institutional arrangements of collective action needed to counter routine social dilemmas is another form of power. For Ostrom, this was the basis of democratic politics – a counter-balance to the monopoly of power in a centralized state (Ostrom, 2014). Such institutional arrangements are often intended to promote environmental and social protections, but could also be in the pursuit of more mundane goals of securing political and economic benefits.[5] The distinguishing feature of this subtype of 'power to' is that institutional arrangements are often founded within the parameters of the status quo, though once set up they may create new opportunities for challenging it, including by promoting new economic opportunities, political solidarities, and subversive discourses (Reddy, 2002; Wilshusen, 2010). For instance, the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India, which mobilizes women from humble backgrounds to support their livelihoods through micro-banking and micro-finance interventions (see, Harriss-White, 2014). This way of thinking about institutions is different from others, who often equate 'institutional power' to structural power, accessible only to international actors and agencies (see, Barnett & Duvall, 2014, p. 3).

The three subtypes of 'power to' discussed above do not always operate in isolation from one another. In some cases, mobilizations that originate to protest dominant models of development may lead to the constitution of collective institutions meant to sustain environmentally responsible practices and egalitarian socio-economic relations (García López, Velicu, & D'Alisa, 2017); or to the instances in which social movements help draft new national legislations and design institutions for program implementation; e.g.the movements for the right to information and right to food in India (Jenkins & Goetz, 1999). On the other hand, some grassroots group seek to avoid the politics of contention. For example, the women's union SEWA engages with the state to secure meaningful incremental gains for its members, while actively avoiding the questions of social differences within the profile of its beneficiaries.[6]

In order to take roots and be sustained, each of these three subtypes of 'power to' also require the promotion of specific types of agendas within decision-making systems (the 2nd dimension of power) and are underwritten by a distinct set of values and discourses (the 3rd dimension of power). While many scholars analyze the second and third dimensions of power separately, we argue that seeing these three dimensions of 'power to' as closely intertwined elements of a portfolio of power give us greater leverage in the analysis of international development.

Note that the examples we have used to illustrate the contents of individual cells in the power in institutions matrix have been divided between the groups of more powerful actors exercising 'power over,' and less powerful actors who pursue opportunities of developing and wielding 'power to' through one of the three types. However, each of the types, subtypes, and dimensions of powers could be exercised by any type of actors and agencies acting at any level. National governments in developing countries are often subordinate to multilateral donor agencies, though in many cases they exercise counter power against these dominant agencies (see, Gore et al., 2019). On the other hand, on many occasions, while national government ministries often act as dominant actors, at times they may empower different actors who produce the varying effects of local elite capture or successful grassroots mobilization (see, García-López, 2019).

The power in institutions matrix we propose above is intended to facilitate a conversation among development scholars, who often discuss different aspects of power without linking it systematically to the theories of power, or without mapping the effects of different types and subtypes of power. The matrix is especially useful for studying the effects of relational power in the context of neoliberalism or similar institutional settings, such as decentralization of various shades that include the use of 'assemblages' or 'orchestration' by powerful multilateral and national actors (Gordon & Johnson, 2017; Li, 2010; Porter & Watts, 2016; Watts, 2012); 'creative accommodations' on the part of those using neoliberalism for their own ends (Wilshusen, 2010); reshaping of norms of social solidarity in response to economic reforms under varying levels of state engagement (MacLean, 2010a,b); implicit bargaining across interlinked action arenas (Kashwan, 2016); 'governance in motion' (Wilshusen, this issue), and 'commoning' as an everyday practice that challenges dominant ideas (García López et al., 2017).

## 5. Overview of the approach to power and institutions in the special issue papers

The contributors to this special issue offer a diversity of insights into the intersections between power and institutions in the neoliberal era. While the contributors to this issue were not asked to directly apply the elements of the power in institutions matrix, each of the contributions illustrates how the exercise of different types and subtypes of power shaped the outcomes of neoliberal interventions in varied contexts. In particular, we highlight below how the papers investigate the power relations at a range of scales, from local to regional to national to international.

[5] We are grateful to Elizabeth Baldwin who helped us fine-tune this argument.

[6] Personal electronic communication, social activist, Ahmedabad, India, October 28, 2017.

The first paper by Fischer and Ali (2018) uses the framework of 'public domain' to comparatively analyze the outcomes of the state-sponsored employment assurance programs in three localities in three Indian states. They show that the decentralized program and the public domain are co-constituted over-time, as a result of three key factors: the state bureaucracy's support to local government; the history of local political mobilization; and the entrepreneurial role of local political leaders. Thus, their paper suggests that outcomes are shaped by an interaction between multiple forms of power – the structural-institutional power of both local and higher-level authorities, and the counter-power and resistance of citizens. The authors conclude that, contrary to the usual expectations about decentralization fomenting elite capture and neoliberal privatization, the reforms in the sites they studied opened new democratic avenues for empowering and benefitting marginalized groups. Indeed, while the performance of India's employment program varies between states, the program was born as a result of sustained resistance on the part of socially-mobilized citizens (Joshi, 2010; Jenkins & Manor, 2017).

Brisbois, Morris, and de Loë (2019) also looks at how power shapes government-initiated collaborative processes, but at the regional watershed level in Canada's Alberta and Ontario provinces. These cases are notable because large private sector energy companies have a significant role in the process.[7] The authors combine Lukes' theory of power with the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework to evaluate how the different dimensions of 'power over' – i.e. overt, agenda-setting and discursive powers – influence the broader context as well as the institutional arena where actors interact. They stress that these less-visible dimensions of power are critical to examine because while they are examined less often in institutional analyses, they tend to be quite effective at preempting resistance. In this case, energy industry players discursively framed the problem as one of promoting economic growth and shaped decision-making agendas to avoid any contestation over the necessity and benefits of oil sands mining expansion. The Canadian state, meanwhile, reinforced these actors' power—for instance by enforcing only selectively the existing environmental regulations – which undermined the ability of the collaborative process to generate more equitable and ecologically-sound policy recommendations. The authors conclude that recognizing these dimensions of power can highlight means to empower marginalized actors and help practitioners navigate collaborative processes to improve their outcomes.

The third paper by García-López (2019) focuses on the political-economic structures, institutions, and collective actions which shape elite capture in community forestry in Durango, Mexico. Drawing on critical institutional and political ecology frameworks, he shows that, contrary to the ideals of Mexican community forestry as autonomous political force, inter-community regional associations were strongly influenced by external elites – particularly by foresters which sought personal benefit. García-López argues that the privileged positions (*positional power*) that foresters secured from decades of working within government-run extension services allowed them to accumulate different forms of capital (i.e., wealth, contacts, legitimacy). Foresters' power was further entrenched by the context of a 'techno-bureaucratic' and corporatist logic (institutions, norms, and discourses) in which community forestry developed. These logics promoted the role of 'experts' in managing forests for timber production and national progress under a single-party rule. Neoliberal reforms have solidified these logics as well as foresters' positions, through new strategic alliances with other powerful actors (local leaders and/or timber corporations), and a weakening of peasants' counter-power. At the same time, García-López shows that neoliberal reforms have created new forms of 'power to' by allowing communities to choose their own forester. Some communities have self-organized their forestry services regionally by crafting new institutions that strongly limit foresters' authority.

Punjabi and Johnson (2019) explain urban water sector reforms in India by situating them in the political economy of rural-urban water transfers in two large metropolitan areas of Mumbai and Chennai. They argue that the ability of cities to establish new forms of water entitlements is shaped by a combination of institutional path dependence, agrarian populism, and a neoliberal restructuring of water governance. Specifically, Punjabi and Johnson show that historical differences in water-allocation rules, together with power relations between urban governments and peasant and indigenous communities in the periphery, strongly influence rural-urban water transfers. Mumbai's colonial-era legacy of prior appropriations in the context of the political marginalization of indigenous groups has allowed the city to secure water entitlements. Chennai, by contrast, has a history of clear property rights and riparian (groundwater) rights of commercial farmers, which has forced the city to depend on the purchase of water from the farmers and private vendors. Other less powerful rural actors, however, have been negatively affected, producing conflict both within communities and between communities and Chennai. Power is thus central to water reallocation in each of these two sites, but the implications of politics differ significantly due to differences in historical institutional legacies, the nature of property rights and the counter-power that the rural/peri-urban groups command in the two metropolitan areas.

The fifth paper by Gore, Brass. Baldwin, & MacLean (2019) studies the cross-national variation in the uptake of neoliberal electricity sector reforms in Uganda, Tanzania, and Ghana to understand the unevenness of neoliberalism. Through a comparative historical analysis, the authors go beyond the usual explanation focused on the economic inefficiency of state-led electricity companies. Rather, they show that while the timing of some kind of reform can be explained by this inefficiency factor, the differences in the pace and extent of reform adoption are the result of international and national power dynamics. Specifically, the pace of reforms is influenced by the extent of power (external autonomy) of national elites vis-à-vis international donors, while the extent of reforms is determined by the domestic power of those elites *vis a vis* the citizenry. Countries with less dependence on a single donor adopted reforms at a slower pace, while those with a historical tradition of socialism, a more competitive democracy, and stronger civil society, adopted less extensive reforms. This paper illuminates the way that 'power to' can be exercised 'from below' by a range of different individuals groups and is not limited to the most politically and economically marginalized. Citizens and civil society organizations can protest and resist the proposed reforms of donors or the more powerful political elites, just as state elites might delay or alter the implementation of the templates imposed by more dominant donors. The authors conclude pointing to the need for scholars and practitioners to unpack the processes underlying neoliberal and other institutional reforms, paying more attention to the domestic political dynamics that articulate and conflict with global norms of reform and service provision.

Bresnihan (2019) mobilizes Foucault's theorizations about governmentality and biopower to study a decade-long government effort to promote community-based institutions in Ireland's fisheries. This decentralization program rejected initial efforts focused on privatization of fisheries through individual fishing quotas, and focus instead on *enabling* the constructive capabilities of resource-users to self-manage the resource. These engagements notwithstanding, the fisheries experts continue to emphasize overfishing

[7] This is reminiscent of "roundtables" for sustainable agriculture production organized by powerful corporations in other countries (e.g. García-López & Arizpe, 2010).

as a problem of unregulated exploitation of common resources, thereby justifying more expansive government interventions. The fisheries users are thus subject to a 'tragedy of slow improvement' in which the genuine efforts from state managers, scientists and fishermen to improve the fisheries – nevertheless fail because of increased pressures from a globalized hyper-competitive market.

The last paper by Wilshusen (2018) uses a transnational lens on power relations. He draws on both Foucault and Bourdieu to analyze two prominent examples of international business and biodiversity conservation initiatives: the Natural Capital Finance Alliance (NCFA) and the Business and Biodiversity Offsets Programme (BBOP). He shows that power relations in these cases are diffuse, spread across networked yet uncoordinated arenas of action – from business to NGOs, UN agencies, or multilateral organizations – but cumulatively supporting the constitution of a 'neoliberal environmentality', enacting and extending the logic of markets to biodiversity conservation. The author highlights the specific practices of assemblage that generate incremental effects and reproduce the logics and organizational forms of a neoliberal conservation. Wilshusen concludes that these small institutional changes contribute to the further commodification of nature, which ultimately serves to further entrench the power of dominant multinational corporations and NGOs.

Taken as a collective, the papers advance our understanding of power and institutions by investigating the various dimensions of 'power over' and 'power to' as well as their institutional and structural (political-economic) contexts. They do so through different theories and analytic frameworks, from Lukes' three-dimensional theory (Brisbois et al., 2019), Foucault's governmentality (Bresnihan, 2019; Wilshusen, 2018), and critical institutionalism (Fischer & Ali, 2018; García-López, 2019; Gore et al., 2019; Punjabi & Johnson, 2019). The papers also employ a mix of methodologies to investigate institutions that operate at different scales, from the local to the transnational, and between different actors: the *local* 'public domains' of interactions between local politicians, state bureaucrats and residents (Fischer & Ali, 2018); the *regional* relations between inter-community organizations and foresters (García-López, 2019), between corporations, state agencies and NGOs in collaborative governance processes (Brisbois et al., 2019) and between different urban-rural actors in urban regions (Punjabi & Johnson, 2019); the *national* relations between politicians, civil society, and regional and international donors and regulatory agencies (Bresnihan, 2019; Gore et al., 2019); and the *international* 'fields' of civil society actors, corporations and governments in global conservation events (Wilshusen, 2018).

The contributors reveal how neoliberalism plays out in multiple social, economic, and political domains, and is accompanied by new vocabularies, practices, networks, and institutions. While coercion is common in some sectors, e.g. extractive sectors, these contributions show that in the main, neoliberalism operates in 'unspectacular', almost microscopic, ways. A suite of discourses and practices associated with neoliberalism demands a new synthesis of power that cuts across the boundaries between different disciplines and between scholarship and praxis. This has been our pursuit – in the next two section, we synthesize theoretical and policy insights we developed in the process.

## 6. Bringing power in: politicizing institutional analysis in world development

A more systematic attention to multiple dimensions of power is critical for understanding international development. The focus on the different dimensions of power in the matrix helps produce a critical and expanded perspective on neoliberalism. Various actors and groups attempt to enact or resist neoliberalism through institutional reforms, the transformation of state structures, and through the alteration of discourses, norms, and habits. Most visibly, neoliberalism shapes institutions at different levels, influencing directly actors' opportunities and constraints (i.e. their power). Indeed neoliberalism is associated with a set of values, preferences, and social practices that are imposed in some cases but are adopted by different actors and agencies, even if unwittingly. As Carroll and Jarvis (2015, p. 298) conclude: "deep marketisation and market instrumentality have clearly pervaded civil society and been politically powerful…often defining the limits of political discourse." Even so, the power in institutions approach we develop in this special issue shows that a finer understanding of power is important for a proper diagnosis of the workings of international development in the shadows of neoliberalism.

Putting the power lens to neoliberalism yields four insights about its workings and ways forward: (1) Neoliberal development persists precisely because of its ability to serve the constituencies that hold more power in the status quo; (2) The politics of neoliberalism takes place at different scales and in multiple arenas in which a range of diverse local, national and transnational actors negotiate institutional change over time through various ways including institutional innovations, partial or delayed implementation, and overt resistance; (3) Neoliberal institutional change creates not just different sets of winners and losers but new types of distributive politics; (4) The politics of neoliberalism is intrinsically linked to the question of environmental sustainability; and, (5) We argue that a proper understanding of the effect of power in institutions is indispensable for building more inclusive and sustainable models of development that focus not just on the outcomes but also on the processes.

First, we argue that the outcomes of neoliberalism – increased inequality, the emergence of illiberal politics of various types, and the failure of institutional reforms to bring about anticipated change – is not just a matter of implementation failure. The essence of neoliberal institutional reforms is attuned to secure the support of the beneficiaries of the status quo, as evident from an overwhelming focus on elite bargains. Moreover, the 'winners' have flouted the stated intentions of economic reforms rather openly. Indeed, some scholars have argued that neoliberal economic reforms serve 'predatory power relations' (Hadiz & Robison, 2005, p. 221). Even so, neoliberalism would not exist in its present form without the support provided by state actors. Instead of being displaced, in many cases, the 'cunning state' strategically implants reforms that favor the dominant actors, while capitalizing on its perceived weakness in order to evade accountability (Randeria, 2003). Austerity policies requiring paralyzing cuts in social welfare programs have hollowed out the state's capacity to deliver human development to its citizens (Chang, 2003). These cutbacks disproportionately hurt the poor who rely more exclusively on public services (Blyth, 2013). The resources saved out of retrenched social welfare programs are then sometimes used to subsidize corporations, including corporate bailouts that continue to increase financial volatility, or the promotion of multi-national oil corporations that contribute to the exacerbation of climate change.[8] The powerful actors in state and society, who benefit from the status quo, also happen to be the *main* beneficiaries of neoliberal institutional reforms.

Second, while the proponents of neoliberalism are focused overwhelming on building state capacity and reforming the national government functioning, neoliberalism unfolds simultaneously at multiple scales. Neoliberal institutions face numerous

[8] International Energy Agency estimates suggest that fossil-fuel consumption subsidies worldwide amounted to $493 billion in 2014. See, http://www.worldenergyoutlook.org/resources/energysubsidies/.

challenges during their implementation and indeed go through a significant transformation as they interact with institutions and organizations at lower scales, generating variegated responses ranging from everyday forms of resistance to institutional hybridizations (Petrova, 2014; Wilshusen, 2010). Increasingly, neoliberalism unfolds as a process that articulates in multiple ways with the various political economies, e.g. mass mobilization, political competition, and the mechanisms of political intermediation that exist across countries and localities (Hellwig, 2015; Kashwan, 2017), hence the concepts of 'actually existing' (Brenner & Theodore, 2002) and 'variegated' neoliberalism (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010; Jessop, 2017). We argue that these outcomes are signs of both the resistance that neoliberalism encounters in the trenches and the potential for invigorating popular engagement in the service of desired changes in the status quo.

Third, a systematic attention to power highlights the ways in which neoliberalism does not simply create new winners and losers, but stimulates a new distributive politics (Ferguson, 2015). In some contexts, neoliberalism has intensified political mobilization, but the ideological content of this activity has bifurcated. For example, the losers of various neoliberal economic policies are mobilizing along new lines, which is fragmenting political parties and shifting electoral politics in significant ways in both the advanced industrialized and developing countries. Neoliberalism has actually undermined democratic consolidation (e.g. the finding that state retrenchment affects the exercise of everyday citizenship in African. See, MacLean, 2010a), political mobilization (e.g. the evidence that Mexico's neoliberal economic reforms stifled the voice of the poor. See, Holzner, 2007); and the increasing casualization of the workforce and informalization of employment, even in the formal sector, which blunted the ability of labor to organize for collective wage bargaining (Kalleberg, 2009; Roberts, 2002). These factors are also associated with the ascendance of right-wing political parties and leaders in many parts of the world (Cramer, 2016; Mudde, 2011; Jayasuriya & Hewison, 2004).

Yet, in a number of other cases, socially and politically mobilized groups of citizens have forced political and economic elites to restructure neoliberal economic reforms to address the challenges of economic inequalities that resulted from the earlier era of state-dominated import-substituting industrialization (Kingstone, 2011). Efforts, which include conditional cash transfer program, have led to noticeable reductions in poverty and national income inequalities in Latin American countries (See, Sandbrook, Edelman. Heller. & Teichman, 2007; Hellwig, 2015; Sugiyama & Hunter, 2013). The long history of strong peasant and labor movements that continue to resonate in contemporary politics in Latin America makes the region rather exceptional in comparison to most countries on the continents of Asia and Africa (Hodgson, 2002; Kashwan, 2017). Even so, such successes are also visible in other contexts, for example, the case of India's employment security program that Fischer and Ali document in this special issue.

Fourth, the distributive politics of neoliberalism is intrinsically linked to the ongoing contestations over national and global environmental governance. For example, the United Kingdom's energy reforms, labeled euphemistically as 'green deal', threatened to impose heavy costs on the poor, while subsidizing the energy consumption of the rich and endangering the broader goals of sustainable development (Reid & Houston, 2013). Similarly, the projects of ecological protections, including the forest-based carbon emission reduction programs often impose significant and uncompensated costs on impoverished indigenous and other forest-dependent people (Ferraro, 2002; Ickowitz, Sills, & de Sassi, 2017). On the other hand, free-market reforms encourage the pernicious political economies of extractivism (Ferguson, 2005). Instead of enforcing requisite regulations, global environmental governance has leaned on 'environmentalism of the rich,' which relies on making the processes of production and consumption more efficient without working to reduce overall consumption (Dauvergne, 2016). The gains of efficient production are invested in expanding the supply chain and finding new consumers, which require the appropriation of natural resources, thereby contributing to intensified land, water, and ocean grabs (Rulli, Saviori, & D'Odorico, 2013). We demonstrate how investigating neoliberal institutions through the power lens reveals the intimate connections between increasing economic inequalities and the large scale and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources.

Fifth, the multifaceted workings of power in international development mean that there are no easy solutions that policymakers and citizen groups can promote readily. The revolutionary slogans of the left, the 'speculative promise' deployed by the right (Van Hemert, 2017), or the currently popular models of expert-led iterations and adaptations do not account for the skewed distribution of power. A broader and systematic consideration of power highlights the ways that individuals and groups with multiple overlapping authorities or ability to coerce and co-opt are embedded in every level of any political system. Moreover, this approach reveals that political contestation is not necessarily zero-sum, where one clearly delineated and attributed win comes at the price of someone else's loss. Groups may not win, but they still resist, and the resistance shifts the development of the rules in some way. Hegemony is challenged on the ground and reworked and customized in the implementation of the new rules, even though the overall effects are rarely neutral for society. These theoretical insights lead to our policy recommendations, which we summarize in the next section.

## 7. Conclusion

Harvard University economist Dani Rodrik asks a pertinent question: "After neoliberalism, what?" (Rodrik, 2002). A decade and a half later, the state of the art literature reveals an interesting conundrum:

> "...the dominant strategies deployed...by international organizations and domestic agencies alike—are too often part of the problem rather than part of the solution. We argue...that success (effective functioning) stems less from 'good institutions' (form) but that success *builds* good institutions..." (Andrews et al., 2017, p. 5)

Meanwhile, Pritchett et al. (2018, p. 353) admonish that since institutional reforms are unlikely to work, developing economies should focus on getting the 'big' investment deals necessary for catalyzing economic growth. The privileging of the technocratic and an apparently apolitical goal of economic growth does not reflect a neutral or objective policy goal. Instead, they reflect the power of existing global political settlements in favor of the continuation of neoliberal economic reforms.

Instead of assuming specific goals for national development, development experts, policymakers, civil society organizations, and citizen groups would be better served by the creation of processes and institutions that enable citizens to deliberate freely about the goals they would like to pursue. As such, learning from the legacy of the Bloomington 'Workshop,' we consider the freedom and the ability to 'craft' local, regional, or national institutions as a form of power (Ostrom, 2010). The second generation economic reforms – e.g., land and labor reforms, which produce significant consequences for large sections of population in the global South, are ripe for such cross-scale collaborations in the service of customized institutional reforms (Grindle, 2001).

To these ends, we present a new typology of power in institutions. This conceptualization builds on the existing scholarship on power which recognizes the importance of distinguishing between the two inter-related facets – 'power over' and 'power to.' Bringing 'power' into the debates over international development reveals not just a variety of fault lines, but an entire suite of optimistic and inclusive strategies for promoting development from above and from below. Hence, the policy implications of our analysis are not solely aimed at the most powerful decisionmakers and actors, but equally at the less powerful decisionmakers and actors who contest the rules of the game.

The subject of popular engagement speaks to the fundamental questions of the balance of power between actors in the state and society. Making visible the stocks and flow of power of social groups, affected variously by the processes of institutional reforms in international development, is an important step toward including the perspectives and interests of society at large. Such broad-based engagements, if sustained for a sufficiently long period, would add to the stocks of social and political capital, and would help address the deficits of democracy (Fox, 2007; Kashwan, 2017; Mann, 2008). It would be a mistake though to ignore the possibilities that actors in state and society could exploit such processes for co-opting the relatively less resourceful actors (García-López & Arizpe, 2010; Li, 2007). Any mechanisms of political and policy engagement need to be protected against influence peddling, which would require persistent vigilance and the ever-widening circle of powers and counter-powers at different levels (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999; Mosse, 2005). There are no silver bullets. The specific effects that a set of institutions produce in practice depends on both historical and contemporary political and economic contexts and on the ways in which different groups of actors engage with institutions (Li, 2002, 2007; MacLean, 2010a,b; Wilshusen, 2010). By way of bridging the literatures on power and institutions, we offer a multi-scale, over time analysis of the effects of neoliberalism, taking context and spatial unevenness very seriously.

A few caveats are worth noting and even offer potential avenues for future research. None of the contributors in our special issue investigates empirical case studies with a Francophone colonial legacy or in the East Asian countries. It is also worth noting that none of the special issue papers interrogate the dynamics of power and institutional change in a highly authoritarian context. The papers range from highly competitive advanced democracies to more newly emerging democracies, but every case features at least some pretense of multi-party elections. The contribution focused on Mexico suggests that long-term but moderately authoritarian legacies are important factors in shaping institutional change today, but some scholars indicate these authoritarian histories may be owed mostly to the post-independence era of state-building (Middlebrook, 1995). Uganda is likely the most authoritarian regime type highlighted in the special issue, and the nature of the electoral authoritarian regime is one of the key explanatory factors for the differences found in the path of institutional reform. Again, these findings suggest that future research might explore how the politics of institutional change might differ in more deeply authoritarian contexts.

While we do not focus in this special issue on local youth groups or the growing middle class, a power-oriented institutional analysis is also relevant to those cases (Brown, 2006; Harvey, 2005). This is important since some recent scholarship suggests that the power of different actors within a given context is *the* driving forces of natural resource governance outcomes (e.g. Krott et al., 2014). State action is crucial for reallocation of power (Agarwal, 2003; Grindle, 2001; Green, 2008; Kashwan, 2017). Our analysis highlights how broader social foundations help to distribute economic and political power, giving these groups more effective representation and even veto power in the process of institutional reform. Indeed, as argued by others, collective action and negotiations beyond economic resources and the marketplace, have often challenged the power of social norms and cultural constructions of marginalized identities in the status quo (Agarwal, 1997, p. 38). This is not a simple story of the hegemonic power of an elite who imposes the adoption of certain templates from above.

These findings are significant for our theories of institutional change. Power had not been adequately theorized in much of institutional theory, which relies quite significantly on the tenets of rational choice and its model of the individual (see, Moe, 2005). As a result, the analysis of the role of power and power asymmetries in the recent report by World Bank remains aloof from the core institutional reforms, the imperfections of which are laid on the problems of political clientelism, social inequalities, and ethnic conflicts. We advocate a conceptualization of institutions as carriers of profound historical legacies, conveyors of the force of law, and a venue for keenly contested struggles over social, economic, and political power (see also, Forsyth & Johnson, 2014; Kashwan, 2017; MacLean, 2010a,b; Teichman, 2012). The power in institutions matrix that we propose here should make it easier for scholars to account for the effects of various types and subtypes of power into analyses of institutions in development.

Donors, policymakers, politicians, and citizens continue to debate and negotiate major institutional changes in the organization of states and market economies in both advanced industrialized and developing countries around the world. Economic inequalities within and between countries around the world continue to fragment and realign political coalitions and to fuel domestic and international conflict. Concerns are also mounting about the erosion of democracy in emerging as well as more advanced industrialized democracies (Ayers & Saad-Filho, 2015; Bruff, 2014). Meanwhile, the global environmental crisis spurs transnational cooperation in some parts of the world, while other political leaders express skepticism about the underlying causes of environmental change, undermining the call for global unity and action.

At this time of uncertainty and division, scholars and development practitioners must engage with communities on all levels to build institutions that foster a new kind of redistributive politics – where the equity and sustainability of development are the explicit and primary objectives. Despite at least a decade of consistent discussions about the problem of rising inequality (Hardoon, 2015; Ostry et al., 2016; World Bank, 2005, 2016), it is difficult to point to a single set of institutional reforms of some consequence that international agencies have taken to mitigate ever-increasing income and wealth inequalities. The discriminatory effects of neoliberalism cannot be understood in isolation of the pervasive social conflicts and power asymmetries that shape international and national policy-making processes. It is no longer possible to depoliticize development by assuming the mantle of objective neutrality as scholars or the pretense of technocratic impartiality as practitioners. Institutional change and policy reform is fundamentally political. We must continue to theorize how power and power asymmetries shape these processes of institutional design and implementation in practice.

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## Conflict of interest

Authors and editors declare no conflict of interest.

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