

The Sovereignty of Numbers: Measurement & power under neoliberalism

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The concept of 'neoliberalism' is commonly associated with markets, enterprise and a dogmatic faith in both. But how does the concept help us understand the constant expansion of quantitative measurement within everyday, institutional and public life? Drawing on my two recent books, *The Limits of Neoliberalism* and *The Happiness Industry*, this paper will seek to do two things. Firstly, to reflect on how the market becomes a model, but not a replacement, for rival social and institutional arrangements. Rendering things quantitative and explicit makes them *market-like*, but not necessarily within the market. Secondly, to consider how certain types of quantitative measurement become imbued with political and even sovereign authority. This requires us to consider what is different about state-mandated forms of measurement. The paper will conclude with some reflections on how the status of neoliberalism (and, with it, authoritative measurement) has changed since 2008.

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