Dialogues in Human Geography

Article

C-change? Geographies of crisis

Dialogues in Human Geography
1(3) 319–335

DOI: 10.1177/2043820611421552
dhg.sagepub.com
SAGE

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Abstract
It is now widely accepted that this is a period of crisis, although commentators differ as to the appropriate comparisons. This article begins by emphasizing that this is not the first time that social scientists have invoked claims of crisis and qualitative change, then examines geographical accounts of neoliberalism to see how crisis is analysed in this literature. It asks if the geographical frameworks and modes of analysis that emerged are adequate to analyse the current period, identifying the significance of five Cs; namely the 'credit crunch', climate change, China and the other 'BRIC' economies, crusades or the resurgence of religion, and cyborgism. The article concludes that in order to examine the changing terrains of the five Cs, both individually and collectively, it will be important to carefully consider the processes through which heterogeneous elements are being configured into new political assemblages, the mutations and transformations that happen as an integral part of these redeployments, and the objects and subjects that are being constituted in these new governmental terrains.

Keywords
assemblage, crisis, neoliberalism

Introduction

Apocalyptic talk of environmental, economic, social and cultural crisis, and the imperatives for significant transformations in the ways in which lives are currently organized, now dominates political-economic commentary. Yet, while there appears to be consensus that this is a period of profound qualitative change, journalists, academics and political pundits debate among themselves as to the appropriate comparators. Is this period the equivalent to the 1970s, in which the oil shocks, rising inflation, and slowing economic growth gave rise to the political formation we now know as neoliberalism? Or is it the equivalent of the 1930s in which a profound financial crisis paved the way for national economic regulation and the interventionist impulses that underpinned both the founding of the postwar Keynesian welfarism in the so-called 'first world' and developmentalism in the so-called 'third world'? Or perhaps we need even longer time horizons; is the shift from national manufacturing to globalizing biocapitalism equivalent to the transition from feudalism to industrialism, with comparable worldwide consequences for nature, labour and capital? Climate change scholars and earth systems scientists would go even further back to find an appropriate point of comparison; for example, the Geological Society of London has announced that this might be the

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end of a geological epoch marked by the demise of the Holocene and the coming of the Anthropocene (Gibson-Graham and Roelvink, 2010). Are we now seeing the emergence of a new set of environmental, economic, political and social challenges with hitherto unknown consequences for the very conceptual categories human geographers and other social scientists work with, including nature, economy, society and culture?

Whatever point of comparison is used by commentators, there seems to be a growing consensus among social scientists that the current period marks a 'paradigm shift' that will have significant implications for political and governmental forms (Brand and Sekler, 2009; Harvey, 2009; Stiglitz, 2008). While it may not be the end of capitalism as some overly hopeful commentators suggest, this article investigates claims that it may be the end of neoliberalism even in its multiple, hybrid and located forms. But is this indeed the case? And, if so, what will follow and how should it be conceptualized? Is this the moment for Marxists who have long predicted the crisis of capitalism to rightfully say 'I told you so'? Is David Harvey (2007) right in underlining how the 'financialization of everything' is associated with the restoration of power of the capitalist ruling class? As he has argued in more recent work, is this also a 'legitimation crisis' in which structures of exploitation based on the neoliberal, free market privatized world are being replaced with an even deeper structure of exploitation (Harvey, 2009: 5)? Or is this an example of the 'counter movement' against the market predicted by Karl Polanyi (1944 [2001]) and recuperated for a new context? For example, Mark Blyth (2002) has demonstrated how times of economic uncertainty give rise to new institutional forms, and Ronaldo Munck (2006) has explicitly argued for the relevance of Polanyi in understanding the relationships between neoliberal global and social movements promoting political and governmental alternatives.

Certainly there are calls for new forms of government intervention and institutional reform. But even those advocating the 'new Keynesianism' accept that a return to postwar Keynesian-welfarism is not possible in a radically interconnected world, and that a new global financial architecture is needed. Then there are the other concerns which have temporarily moved onto the back burner as the global financial system continues to teeter. Climate change has replaced acid rain and nuclear war as the environmental catastrophe that threatens to fundamentally change human life as we know it. Resource prices (including gold, oil and food) remain highly volatile. The postwar institutions of global governance are beginning to creak as global economic power moves away from the USA and Europe towards the rapidly growing economies of the BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India and China). As we saw clearly in the Copenhagen and Cancun climate change talks, this is making concerted global responses to contemporary economic and environmental challenges even more difficult than usual. And at the subnational scale many geographic and ethnic communities – across the political spectrum – are feeling socially isolated and economically vulnerable. This is posing very real risks of communitarian and/or sectarian mobilizations. Finally, and importantly, bodies and biology are being recast as 'the politics of life itself' (Rose, 2007) is reshaped by new understandings of science, kinship and genetics that are being driven by the rise of biotechnology and biocapitalism.

To use a familiar phrase, we are indeed living in interesting times. But in such times it is also all too easy to get carried away by apocalyptic narratives. This article focuses on the multiple issues contributing to the perception that this is a period of great, perhaps even unprecedented, globalized change, and examines how we, as human geographers, might analytically engage with these issues. I begin by emphasizing the necessity of resisting the tendency to totalizing and epochal thinking that is once again becoming widespread, and the importance of examining in more nuanced ways how heterogeneous aspects of political life are being taken up and reconfigured in new governmental and political formations. Following a more extended discussion of five key arenas that are being 'problematized' (see Dean, 1999) in new ways, I then identify a series of analytical issues associated with the increasing entanglement of, and strategic linkages between, these governmental formations. My argument is that we will need to carefully engage with the changes in

each of these arenas in order to show what the critical continuities and disjunctures are, and to reveal how they are imbricated in more generalized claims about the need for new political and institutional forms. Seen in this context, I am arguing that these governmental formations should be seen as assemblages (Li, 2007; Ong and Collier, 2005) that are still 'in the making'. In the conclusion I explicitly return to the question of whether or not this is the end of neoliberalism, and assess what this means for analyses of the geographies of crisis.

Theorizing crisis

It is important to remember that claims of qualitative shifts in economic, political and social life are, in and of themselves, not unusual among critical social scientists. Indeed, sociologist Mike Savage (2009) argues that in postwar Britain social scientists distinguished themselves from their humanities colleagues precisely through their focus on the 'new'. More generally, the intellectual forebears of the contemporary social sciences were the scholars – both theorists and analysts – of modernity. They saw the task of knowledge creation as that of tracing new economic, political and social configurations, and showing the effects of these configurations for different places and people. During the 1950s and 1960s, the period during which the social sciences consolidated and came to occupy their present role in the Anglo-American academy, geographers were among those centrally involved in these tasks of describing, measuring and analysing and thereby helping constitute distinctive, territorially bounded, forms of economy, state and society in countries around the world. Their aim was to trace national economic, political and social differences in light of an overarching conception of progress (Connell, 2007). Importantly, as both Timothy Mitchell (2002) and Nikolas Rose (1999) have emphasized in their differing engagements with this theme, these nationally bounded conceptions of economy, state and society underpinned political projects of both the 'right' and the 'left', and of 'first world' Keynesian welfarism and 'third world' developmentalism.

These nationally bounded understandings of economy, state and society were beginning to erode by the time of the last period of so-called 'crisis'. With the collapse of the long period of economic expansion that had characterized the postwar decades, recession and a series of dramatic oil price rises sparked the onset of a prolonged economic crisis characterized by deindustrialization and high levels of unemployment in developed countries, and a debt crisis in developing countries. By the late 1980s discussions of crisis and restructuring were central to both broader political discussions and social science analyses across the disciplines. Indeed in New Zealand, where I was a student at the time, the key undergraduate geography textbook to emerge from efforts to understand this period was subtitled 'a geography of restructuring' (Britton et al., 1993). Influential international geographical works from the time included David Harvey's (1989) *The Condition of Postmodernity* and Ed Soja's (1989) *Postmodern Geographies*, both of which were centrally concerned with theorizing what were then being described as the new geographies of capitalism. Importantly for my argument herein, Soja famously argued that the concept of restructuring conveyed the notion of both a 'break' and a 'brake', and involved a shift towards a significantly different ordering of economic, social and political life. His claim was that restructuring falls somewhere between piecemeal reform and revolutionary transformation, 'between business as usual and something completely different' (Soja, 1989: 159).

Over the next decade human geographers and other social scientists increasingly accepted that there was a new geography of capitalism associated with the shift towards a new international division of labour and globalized production processes, that the institutions of capitalism had begun to develop distinctive new forms at multiple scales, and that there had been shifts in social life associated with new understandings of citizenship and increasing 'social polycentricity'. Terms such as post-Fordism, postmodernism, global, late capitalism, disorganized capitalism and postindustrialism (among others) were the currency of these debates. Furthermore,

however this qualitative change was conceptualized, it began to be widely accepted that the changing nexus of relationships between economy, state and society meant that the nation state was no longer the sole container for economic, political and social processes, if indeed it ever was. Often this tendency was framed through critiques of 'methodological nationalism' and it was also marked by arguments for a focus on new analytical units, including Massey's 'power geometries', Sassen's 'global cities', Brenner's 'new state spaces', Castells' 'spaces of flows', Appadurai's notion of 'scapes', and neo-Foucauldian 'assemblages', among others.

More generally, however, despite the growing recognition of 'new times' (to borrow a phrase from the influential journal *Marxism Today* that was widely used during the 1990s) many social scientists studying these political-economic changes were reticent to examine the broader implications for their analytical frameworks. When it became obvious that the domain and content of a concept had undergone a mutation that rendered earlier understandings problematic, the usual response was an attempt to 'fix' a new version of the concept. Hence the prevalence of debates over the relevance of dichotomous concepts such as Fordism/post-Fordism, modernity/postmodernity, organized/disorganized capitalism, keynesian/neoliberal, local/global, and so on, in the literature of that period. Many such concepts had an inherent impulse to total; 'they ... became concepts to grasp the essence of an epoch' (Barry et al., 1996: 3).

The problem with such epochal thinking is that it tends to give rise to 'all or nothing' accounts in which either everything has changed or nothing has changed. As Savage (2009: 218) explains in the context of his research on British sociology, such conceptualizations separate out the past and the present and the novelty of the new is positioned against the characteristics of the old. Interestingly, he shows that not only did this style of reasoning actively militate against the necessity to engage with a complex and differentiated world, but it also meant that epochalism became instantiated within the very infrastructure of social science research practice in the forms of the sample survey and interview which focused on documenting change. More broadly, Savage's argument may also help explain why abstracted indicators of temporal states (such as globalization, post-Fordism, postmodernity) are often given both analytical and professional precedence over the deeply contextualized, substantive accounts produced through empirically grounded approaches.

Theorizing neoliberalism

The changing content of the debates about neoliberalism can help illustrate what was learned as analysts grappled with accounts of crisis and restructuring last time round and, more specifically, can show how a particular group of social scientists engaged with and, to a certain extent overcame, the problem of epochal thinking. I have chosen this particular example because this is a conceptual debate in which I have been a protagonist for a number of years. Indeed, neoliberalism is a term that has had particular currency in the discipline of geography, and it could be argued that for many human geographers neoliberalism was the concept that in the end captured the debates about qualitative changes in contemporary economic, political and social life that have taken place over the last two decades. That said, the term is also now ubiquitous in the broader social sciences. It is used as both a means of delineating the period as a whole – neoliberal times, neoliberal era, neoliberal decade, neoliberal world – as well as in relation to a wide range of other more specific phenomena including the neoliberal university (Davies et al., 2006), neoliberal cities (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Hackworth, 2007), neoliberal citizenship (Brodie, 2004; Hindess, 2002), neoliberal geopolitics (Roberts et al., 2003), neoliberal subjects (Mitchell, 2006; Walkerdine, 2003) and even neoliberal nature (Heynen et al., 2007).

It is important to remember that this was not always the case. In early analyses of neoliberalism, in which the focus was on nation state reform programmes, there was considerable debate about how the new market-oriented approach to politics should be understood. In these influential arguments neoliberalism was framed as 'jungle law' (Peck and Tickell, 1994). It was understood to be the politics of the crisis and therefore destined to be a short-lived

phenomenon, the perils of which would be quickly recognized by academics and publics alike, and a welcome return to the universalistic aspirations of Keynesian-welfarism would follow. In the efforts to challenge neoliberalism, geographers, like many of their social science colleagues, focused their attention on documenting the social inequities produced by this new approach to politics; tracing how deregulation, privatization and marketization exacerbated social differences based on class, region, gender and race/ethnicity. From early on, however, there was a series of theoretical challenges to these accounts which took the form of claims that neoliberalism was more novel, more original and more challenging than many on the political and academic left were often prepared to acknowledge. These commentaries came from a variety of positions and included the sociological accounts of Stuart Hall (1988) who argued that Thatcherism articulated contradictory discourses about tradition and markets, as well as the early interventions of the London-based History of the Present network who deployed a reading of the late work of Foucault on governmentality to argue for an analysis of what they called 'advanced liberalism' (Rose and Miller, 1992).

As the theoretical debate and research agenda on neoliberalism has developed, and because neoliberalism did indeed prove to be less transient than many of the early commentators anticipated, so too did the effects of the new market-oriented political forms begin to receive greater attention from geographers. Indeed, for a while analyses of neoliberalism seemed to be everywhere – as I complained in a somewhat tetchy *Society and Space* editorial following the 2002 American Association of Geographers conference (Larner, 2003). The term neoliberalism was being used to analyse processes as diverse as new forms of industry training in the United Kingdom, the post-apartheid regime in South Africa, water privatization in the Andes, the rise of global feminist NGOs, competitive city strategies in Canada and new forms of environmentalism in the United States.

The difficulty was that the content of neoliberalism itself was usually taken for granted. There was a widespread tendency to see neoliberalism as a preconstituted theoretical explanation and self-evident descriptor of contemporary forms of economic, political, social and environmental change. Identifying this problem in his critical commentary, Clive Barnett (2005) subsequently argued that these disciplinary accounts of neoliberalism provided a simplistic 'consoling' reiteration of how the world works and offer little assistance in thinking about the rise of pluralistic differences and new forms of effective collective action. He pointed out that it reproduces a monolithic narrative 'in which recent history is understood in terms of a motivated shift away from public-collective values to private-individualistic values' (Barnett, 2005: 8) and that analyses of neoliberalism paid little attention to the proactive role of sociocultural processes in provoking changes in modes of governance, policy and regulation. From a different theoretical perspective, but also concerned with the direction of discussions of neoliberalism in geography, Noel Castree (2006: 4) also voiced his fear that the 'neoliberalism depicted over and over again is a pure archetype: something unreal that has no consequences or existence in itself'.

More recently, there have been sustained efforts to develop historical geographies of neoliberalism that allow us to identify different political-economic modalities and emphasize the hybridity and contingency of this phenomenon. One consequence was a shift from an emphasis on particular political projects to process-oriented accounts (captured by the shift in geographical terminology from neoliberalism to neoliberalization) that attempted to focus on historically and geographically specific cases and locations. Whether we want to call these different forms 'roll back' and 'roll out' neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell, 2002), neoliberalism and inclusive liberalism (Craig and Porter, 2005), neoliberalism and the social investment state (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003), or even 'after neoliberalism' as my New Zealand colleagues and I have done (Larner et al., 2007), the result was the growing recognition that 'actually existing neoliberalism' takes many and diverse forms, both temporally and spatially. Moreover, as analysts became more interested in how different theories, policies and techniques came together to constitute neoliberalism in different forms in different places, so too did

poststructuralist perspectives, including actor-network and governmentality literatures, emerge as increasingly important analytical approaches in this literature.

Two important bodies of work have emerged as a result of this emphasis on specificity and contingency. The first is the detailed ethnographies of particular 'global assemblages' (Ong and Collier, 2005), being produced in particular by anthropologists but also with important contributions from geographers such as Kris Olds (2007). Tania Li's (2007) work on community forestry management programmes is an exemplary contribution to this discussion. Rather than seeing this as yet another example of the neoliberalization of nature, she shows how a diverse array of agents (villagers, labourers, entrepreneurs, officials, activists, aid donors, scientists) and objectives (profit, pay, livelihoods, control, property, efficiency, sustainability, conservation) come together in such an assemblage. Similarly, Ardhana Sharma's (2008) book on women's empowerment projects in neoliberal India demonstrates how feminist, Freirian and Gandhian approaches articulate with the market-oriented approaches advocated by the World Bank and international donors in positioning empowerment as a technology of government and development.

The second set of contributions – and this is where geographers have perhaps become more involved – has seen the more careful tracing of mobile actors, policies and techniques (but see the earlier sociological contributions from Dezelay and Garth, 2000, and Bockman and Eyal, 2002). This has underpinned a renewed focus on policy transfer and the transnational networks of scientific and economic expertise. For example, in a recent article on New Zealander Mike Moore, I traced how this working-class unionist came to be Director General of the WTO and what this meant for his understanding of global trade, markets and economic justice (Larner, 2009). More generally, a special issue of *Geoforum* explores the mobilities and mutations that characterize policy transfer and the diverse and embodied actors involved (Peck and Theodore, 2010). Although there are important differences between approaches that draw on discussions of assemblage and policy mobilities, both of these show that neoliberalism is not only imposed from the outside, that it is certainly not simply 'fast' policy transfer and the importing of 'best practice', and that there are complex transnational geographies and sociologies that need to be carefully examined.

These studies have also revealed that the actors and processes involved in apparently neoliberal political formations are much more diverse than initially assumed. Neoliberalization (to use the term now most widely used in geography) cannot be explained by simply focusing on paradigmatic figures like Hayek, Thatcher and Reagan (Collier, 2009). There are 'oppositional' figures playing key roles in neoliberal assemblages, as Li shows by highlighting the role of activists and academics in her example of community forestry management, as Sharma shows in her account of feminist involvement in development projects, and as I emphasize in my article on Mike Moore. Finally, there is now a significant body of work that reveals that techniques conventionally associated with neoliberalism have been taken up by both authoritarian and left-leaning governments, as well as those more market-oriented governments we might expect to be sympathetic to neoliberalism (Ferguson, 2010). There are also examples where neoliberal techniques have been used to strengthen the state or in projects of social welfare that are in part a response to neoliberalism (Collier, 2009; Hoffman, 2010). Indeed it was this phenomenon that my New Zealand colleagues and I had observed, and that informed our attempts to grapple with the conceptual implications of 'after neoliberalism'. Tracing carefully how such techniques move from one context to another and the work that they do in different settings is thus revealing unexpected political alliances and hybrid political articulations.

Reflecting on this growing body of work on neoliberalism, Stephen Collier (2009) has recently argued that a 'knee jerk' assessment that involves identifying aspects of contemporary rule – such as responsibilization, or calculative practices, or government at a distance – and then assuming that what we are seeing is necessarily 'neoliberalism' is problematic. Indeed, one of the problems with the wider literature has been a tendency to identify any political programme with neoliberal tendencies as

essentially neoliberal, and then proceed as if this assumption provides a sufficient account of its nature or an explanation of its existence (Rose et al., 2006). The consequence, as Collier explains, is that an observation of a neoliberal part is taken to mean that the analyst is dealing with a neoliberal whole. Consequently, there is a strong tendency to think that neoliberalism is THE total logic of power relations in society (hence the claims about the neoliberal era, neoliberal decade, neoliberal world and so on mentioned above), albeit with certain local specifications and modifications.

In short, neoliberalism is treated not only as if it was a coherent regime that dominated an epoch, but also as if it was the only political formation worthy of our attention. This is not just to argue for the need to disturb the big 'N' formulations of neoliberalism by examining more carefully its diverse political forms and empirical manifestations. One effect of the fixation with neoliberalism is that it has blinkered us to other, equally significant, expressions of power, including authoritarian, neocolonial and disciplinary forms that also abound in current political formations (Larner, 2011). Analysts have also downplayed the diversely generative aspects of power, and as a result often overlooked the possibility that may be more or less progressive versions of neoliberalism (Lewis, 2009). Finally, we have tended to forget the important point made over a decade ago by Nikolas Rose; namely that advanced liberal techniques can be articulated to diverse political projects (Rose, 1999; see also Hoffman, 2010). In sum, epochal thinking has meant that we have failed to ask important questions about the nature and content of contemporary political formations and our analyses have correspondingly been partial.

C-change?

The reason for reviewing these debates about neoliberalism is because today we face similar intellectual and analytical challenges to those that confronted scholars trying to make sense of new political-economic formations in the 1980s and 1990s, and we need to remember what was learned last time round. If these are indeed again qualitatively 'new times' for the institutions of capitalism and forms of social life, are our modes of analysis up to the task? What have we learned from these earlier debates about concepts such as neoliberalism? How do we avoid the risk of using concepts and categories from one period to analyse another? How do we avoid the trap of epochal thinking in a period that is also clearly one of dramatic globalized change?

In the remainder of the article I identify five arenas that are being examined as part of the current generalized acceptance of crisis, and which I argue will prefigure and shape the contours of qualitatively new political and governmental forms. This is not to argue that these five arenas will completely replace familiar social scientific and political engagements; for example, debates about the relationships between states and markets, increasing social and cultural diversity, new forms of citizenship, and multilevel governance will remain prominent. But these arenas are emergent aspects of a new terrain that I think should be identified and explored as a matter of urgency. I have been characterizing them as the five Cs (sea change, if you like!) – hence the title of this article. More rigorously, and using the language of governmentality, they are now 'problematizations' constituting new objects of political thought and action. They involve distinctive understandings of who and what is to be governed, and employ particular techniques and tactics to achieve these governmental ambitions (Dean, 1999: 18). Moreover, because these problematizations involve distinctive knowledge practices, they are also shaping intellectual and disciplinary formations – and not just because politicians and funding bodies are privileging the generating of knowledge about them – although this too is an important part of the analysis I will develop.

Credit crunch

Perhaps not surprisingly, given that the global financial crisis has dominated recent discussions about crisis, the first C is for 'credit crunch'. Indeed this issue has become so ubiquitous that in Australia journalists and politicians now refer to it by the shorthand term GFC.[1] While this sustained period of financial mayhem may have started in the

subprime housing market of the United States, this peculiarly American crisis has now become a global crisis that will require a concerted global response. It is difficult to predict what this new global financial system might look like, and this is not my task herein. Rather, I want to underline how we all – not just academics, governments, businesses and banks, but also ordinary people in their everyday lives as mortgage holders, workers, consumers and savers – have begun to think and act in new ways as the global financial crisis is understood and problematized in particular ways. There is work to be done as we observe how these politics work through and analyse the global and everyday financial geographies that emerge. Surprisingly, perhaps, geographers are not as well placed as they might be to engage with these accounts. We remain a very productivist discipline, and if anything the events of the last two years underline the point that 'markets' are a different political formation to the 'economy' and that both are a long way from being explained by accounts that conceptualize firms, investors and workers as 'rational economic actors'. As Engelen and Falconbridge (2009) have recently argued, geographical analyses will need to move beyond productivism, beyond epochal thinking, and beyond rationality, in making sense of these new financial geographies.

This is not simply a matter of tracing the geography of global finance (Clark, 2005) or focusing on the physical centres for its production and circulation, such as global cities, offshore financial centres and emerging markets. Indeed, geographers already know quite a bit about these topics. It also means focusing on the actual financial objects in circulation, the symbolism they convey, and the networks they help knit together (Gilbert and Helleiner, 1999). It means understanding that the geographies of finance involve flows of not just capital, but also knowledges, people and techniques. What are the topographies of ownership, regulation and action in the very diverse arenas of pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, high street banks and insurance companies? What new actor-networks are emerging as finance shifts from government to governance, including the new focus on machine intelligence (Leyshon and Thrift, 1999)? Where is the cultural geography that would let us understand the subjectivities, emotions, effects and affects of finance? How should we understand the emphasis on 'performativity' that shapes not only financial actors but also material objects, and the interactions of these actors and objects? I am thinking here of Knorr Cetina and Brugger's (2002) work on traders and their screens as postsocial life forms that construct 'the market' in particular forms, the mutations in risk expertise and technologies from prediction to pre-emption (about which I have more to say below), and the co-constitution of particular financial subjectivities such as consumers, traders and the so-called 'Herd'.

Climate change

The second C is that of climate change. This is more familiar terrain for geographers. Unlike financial and financial geographies, discussions of the environmental crisis and the rise of what is now known as 'neoliberal nature' are already well developed in the discipline (see, for example, the articles collected in Heynen et al., 2007). These discussions are also starting to expand into new areas as the problems of the carbon economy and global food security have become the focus of growing political attention. The studies examine the disparate processes of enclosure, deregulation, privatization, marketization and commodification in areas as diverse as those of ecotourism, bioprospecting, debt for nature swaps, carbon sequesteration schemes, fair trade and green labelling. They underline how biophysical nature has become an important frontier for the deepening and expanding of markets, and agriculture and forestry the basis for new markets and systems of extraction. They have also highlighted the rise of new epistemic communities – I particularly like the phrasing of 'think tanks as skeptic tanks' (Dorsey, 2007) that help us understand the reasons why science and scientists are being politicized in new ways. Other important accounts include the changing scales and capacities of the state being explored by Liverman (2004) and others, and the new governmental forms being assembled in this arena including not just the marketized arrangements discussed above but also partnerships and community-based initiatives (McCarthy, 2007).

These discussions are, of course, now taking centre stage as concerns about the environment have begun to play a much more prominent role in economic, social and cultural arenas. But they are also beginning to mature and mutate. New conversations are beginning to take place between physical and human geographers, and between scientist and social scientists more generally, and we are gradually relearning how to talk with each other. These are difficult conversations and it is not easy to predict their content and outcomes ahead of time. But they are transforming the intellectual terrain on which we are working. We already know that the new knowledges that will emerge will not take the form of 'social impact' models often imagined by physical scientists in which scientists deal with 'facts' and the job of the social scientists and humanities scholars is to show how these 'facts' will impact on economies, politics, societies and culture. But neither will they be the 'social construction' approaches often privileged by social scientists and humanities scholars, in which science, nature and the environment simply become objects of study for social science. Both science and social science are being transformed by these conversations, and the categories of nature and society will be eroded, or may even disappear as discrete entities, just as they are in the worlds that we are analysing.

China and the other 'BRIC' economies

It is with the third C that my title begins to stretch. Most immediately it refers to China, but what I am trying to capture with this third 'C' is the growing prominence of the so-called 'BRIC' economies, and more generally the new forms of geo-economic and geopolitics that are ensuing as the balance of world power shifts. As well as being a major challenge to neoliberalism, the current crisis is also a challenge to Anglo-American hegemonies (Jacques, 2009). This radical reconfiguration of geo-economic and geopolitical power is evident not only in finance, as China's sovereign wealth funds become crucial to the bailout of US and European financial institutions, but also in the changing patterns of manufacturing and trade, and the talks going on around the future of international institutions, among other areas. As Mark Beeson (2009) speculates in his reflections on these changes, it may be that China and the United States are 'trading places' in ways that would have seemed highly unlikely just a decade or so ago. At the very least, understanding this new terrain will mean that those of us who remain in comfortable Anglo-American niches will need to 'get out more'. Neither can the rest of the world simply be 'our' case studies (and indeed the very assumptions of 'us' and 'them' will need to be carefully examined in this rapidly changing context).

Again, the scholarship required to make sense of these geo-economic and geopolitical changes will demand new conversations and new knowledges. In particular, we should be careful about importing concepts developed in one context to make sense of another. The most immediate risk is that we unwittingly reproduce a 'ladder-like' vision of history that echoes the evolutionary tendencies of modern theorists such as Rostow and recentres particular experiences (US, UK) by erasing the multiplicity of the current era. For example, in his provocative discussion of China's new geopolitical and geo-economic roles, Martin Jacques (2009) argues that concepts such as civilization, nation state and ethnicity have very particular connotations and cannot be directly mapped onto the Chinese experience. Similar but more specific claims have been made in the debates about neoliberalism; for example, China scholars such as Sigley (2006) and Nonini (2008) have explicitly asked what it means to say 'neoliberal China'. Is this a focus on the *ideologies* of policy-makers; has China become more competitive and market-oriented? Or is the focus on the *discourses and techniques* of governance itself: is China being governed through techniques that promote individual autonomy, initiative and entrepreneurship? Even if it is the latter, should we name the new emphasis on individual effort, educational attainment, earning power and credentialism as neoliberalism (Anagnost, 2004; Hoffman, 2010)? How does this new emphasis articulate with older traditions of self-cultivation and discipline? These questions underline the more general point made by Collier (2009) that almost any action by a contemporary governing agent can be, and often is, named

as neoliberal. As Nonini (2008) argues, the difficulty lies in imagining and theorizing alternatives 'outside' neoliberalism – not only those that are progressive, but also those that are not.

Crusades or the resurgence of religion

My fourth C is perhaps the most controversial and, at least at first glance, the most eclectic. In identifying 'crusades' or perhaps more accurately religion or faith, I am gesturing to the way in which relationships between the secular and the sacred are being reconfigured across diverse terrains and multiple scales, including the realms of geopolitics, law, community and identity. Wendy Brown (2006: 706) describes this as 'the late modern eruption of the theological in the political'. In the literature on neoliberalism, analyses of the role of religion have often been conflated with broader debates about relationships between neoliberalism and neoconservatism, in which the later is associated with the reassertion of traditional conceptions of family, community, etc. This may indeed be the case in some settings but, as we now understand, the relationship between neoliberalism and neoconservatism is contingent not necessary (Larner, 2003). For example, in her contribution to these discussions Brown (2006) highlights what she calls the 'home grown' specificity of the 'fundamentalist and religiously inflected responses to late modernity found in the United States'. That said, in a wide range of diverse settings we now see the increasingly overt mixing of religious claims into political discourse and debates. We need to know much more about the resurgence of religion as the basis for local, national and transnational communities, and the heterogeneous forms it takes. By the way, just when did the term 'faith communities' become part of the British political lexicon?

This is not the geographies of religion recently argued for by Nina Laurie (2010), who links the emergence of new geographies of religion to broader shifts in geographical scholarship that centre positionality and emotions. Rather I am interested in understanding why it is that the invocation of religion/faith has become more evident in very diverse, and apparently unconnected, arenas. We need scholarship that undertakes the hard work of associating the reconfiguration of religions with the circulation of people, goods, social movements, rights and discourses (see, for example, Levitt, 2007). It is likely that such research will help explain how and why the political spectrum that we (I) take for granted is reconfiguring as the diverse coalitions of free marketers, religious conservatives and populists that made up the traditional right-wing parties have begun to splinter, while at the same time we are seeing environmentalism and feminism being mobilized as part of a new conservative politics. Why have British soldiers in Afghanistan begun wearing crucifixes in unprecedented numbers (BBC Four, 24 April 2010)? Why are the Belgian and French governments so concerned with the handful of women living in Europe who wear full veils that they are trying to pass laws against faces being covered in public? And, in a very different arena and register, how should we understand the appearance of the tenets of new age religions and martial arts in management and leadership courses? Rather than seeing these phenomena as simply the reassertion of tradition and/or the erosion of secularism, we will need to analyse how contemporary expressions of religion and faith form as dynamic entities within and across national boundaries, and involve changing forms of politics, cultures and markets.

Cyborgism

My final C – cyborgism – owes a debt to Donna Haraway and her emblematic trans-species human-mouse hybrid (Haraway, 1997). More generally, there is growing interest among geographers in the relationships between contemporary systems of capitalism and developments in the life sciences and biotechnology.[2] How is it that the bodily vitality of populations (labour power, fertility, sexuality, health) has become enrolled in political and economic processes? What new knowledges and forms of expertise are being produced? Why is the gift economy being displaced with the rise of commercialized blood banks and marketized organ donation? How should we understand the new forms of commodification such as clinical trials, genetic

databases and the harvesting of oecytes? There are, of course, explicit and multiple geographies to these processes; perhaps the best-known example is that of IVF tourism (in which wealthy women access privately run fertility clinics in countries where oecyte 'harvesting' is permitted). These geographies also include the mobile providers of reproductive labour and organ donation. Less is known about the geographies of biocapitalism discussed by Rajan (2007) and others, in which the global flows of ideas, information, capital and people are being connected to biotechnology and market forces, giving rise to what he calls techno-scientific capitalism.

It is not surprising that feminist geographers and other feminist scholars are turning their attention to this field, as new conceptions of kinship, family and gender are integral to this terrain. Bodies, ethics and affects are being reworked as the boundaries between humans, and between humans and non-humans, are being blurred. This is not just to argue that we need to know more about how the new forms of biocapitalism are commodifying both bodies and body parts – although this in itself is critically important – but we also need to bring together feminist political economy and analyses of biopolitics to understand how capitalist and vitalist processes are changing the very nature of production, reproduction and consumption. For example, how are new regulatory forms being assembled in a context when the entire notion of the body has become fluid (Dickenson, 2010)? How should we understand new forms of biosociality and political activism emerging around genome websites (McNeill, 2010)? How should we understand the changing nature of life itself?

Governing the C-change/sea change

So these are the five Cs of the current crisis. Of course, there may well be others,[3] but herein I am less interested in that question than I am in thinking about how these new problematizations, and the ways in which they come together, should be analysed by academic commentators. I begin from the assumption that the widespread identification of crisis, and associated arguments for qualitative change, means that existing governmental and political forms are losing their coherence and effectiveness, and that new forms of understanding and acting are being invented. However, the content and effects of these governmental and political shifts cannot be presupposed. To examine the changing terrains of the five Cs, both individually and collectively, we will need to carefully consider the processes through which heterogeneous elements are configured into new governmental and political assemblages, the mutations and transformations that happen as an integral part of these redeployments, and the objects and subjects that are constituted in these terrains. In the following discussion, I show how such process-oriented approaches to knowledge production may allow us to more effectively grasp the new dis/conjunctures.

First of all, these shifts are happening on top of an already reconfigured governmental and political terrain. This is not an argument about the changing role of the state, the expansion of the market, or even the ongoing reconfiguration of the tripartite division between state, market and civil society. Indeed, to start with these familiar conceptual categories would be to misapprehend the nature of the political-economic spaces and subjects involved. One consequence of processes such as devolution, marketization, the shift to outsourcing, the rise of business and community partnerships, diverse forms of commodification, and so on, is that there are now systematic and systemic limits to state planning, public management and familiar forms of political participation. Many of the key actors in each of these five arenas were already in the private and/or third sector or have recently moved there. More generally the blurring of the boundaries between state/market, public/private, citizenship/consumption is giving rise to new forms of politics and power (Newman and Clarke, 2009). New 'flex organisations' (Wedel, 2001) that work across public-private boundaries and strategically shift their status in order to access resources and bypass conventional political constraints and forms of accountability have proliferated at all levels of government. In this context it is clear that neoliberalism (or perhaps more accurately 'advanced liberalism') will have profound and long-lasting governmental consequences, even as the immediate political-

economic consequences of 'more market approaches' are identified and addressed.

Relatedly, all five Cs underline the importance of focusing more explicitly on the transnational networks of expertise through which policies, technologies and bodies travel. These networks are not the singular networks of the policy transfer literature; scientific, economic, political and social expertises are increasingly heterogeneous and globalized (Czarniawska and Sevon, 2005; Peck and Theodore, 2010). For example, in the field of climate change it is not simply the global consortia of networking scientists such as those associated with the preparation of IPCC reports that require attention. We need to know much more about the ways in which scientific knowledge about climate change has itself become multiply politicized, pluralized and multidirectional as, for example, policy processes, indigenous knowledges and local impacts have become integral parts of the scientific climate change edifice. Indeed, I would argue that climate change knowledge has recently become a highly unstable category. A wide range of globalizing 'intermediaries' has also appeared; consultants, communicators, public engagement experts, think tanks, journalists, social entrepreneurs and political activists all play explicit roles in producing and circulating these mobile and mutating knowledges.

The five Cs and their multiple local, national, transnational and global forms are not only highly unstable, they are also beginning to articulate in unexpected ways that need further attention. It is striking, for example, how climate change and geopolitics ('weather and war' to use social theorist Brian Massumi's, 2009, shorthand formulation) are now being explicitly linked in discussions about global insecurities. Like many currently living in the UK, I was riveted to the leader's debates that preceded the recent election and the issues that former Prime Minister Gordon Brown ran together in the second debate were telling; he name-checked climate change, terrorism and poverty all in the same breath and spoke as if they were comparable issues. My point is that the five Cs are beginning to be understood to stand in relationships of mutual determination in ways that were not the case even five years ago. We can also see this at the level of knowledge formations; for example, we might note how economics is joining up with environment, and sociology with genetics. This might also explain why complexity theory is coming to be seen as being at the forefront of new knowledge formation, and why the phraseology of 'complex adaptive systems' has begun to permeate multiple fields.

It is now accepted that singular knowledge forms will not be able to provide answers in today's globalized, joined-up and uncertain world. Hence the growing imperatives to be interdisciplinary, and the invention of a whole raft of pedagogical and virtual techniques that bring people together and encourage them to be so. We are all now being exhorted to be interdisciplinary and it is somehow unambiguously a 'good thing' to work across traditional fields of knowledge. This is not to argue that interdisciplinarity per se is new. As Barry et al. (2008: 23) emphasize, 'knowledge production has always taken place in a variety of institutional sites and geographically dispersed assemblages'. But what is new in the current context is the understanding that interdisciplinarity is the appropriate response to the dilemmas generated by the five Cs. In turn, these new interdisciplinary encounters are animating new debates; for example, the meeting of social science and genetics has generated new claims about the causes of undesirable social behaviours (e.g. behavioural economics) and made possible new ways of enhancing performance (e.g. tracing genetic dispositions). This imperative to be interdisciplinary has also privileged particular kinds of social scientific knowledge, and is radically transforming the arenas within which we are working. It is interesting to remember that not so long ago many of the fields that feature prominently in the five Cs – such as climate change, natural hazards, security studies, sociology of religion and area studies – were narrowly defined, relatively static, and seen as being well out of disciplinary mainstreams, let alone as informing the 'cutting-edge' scholarship needed to solve the 'grand challenges' of today's world. Brand new academic fields (earth systems science, the sociology of science, the predictive life sciences) have also emerged as the five Cs have consolidated and taken centre stage.

This is not just happening in the academic world. There are new modes of contact between academic, policy and practitioner worlds, and a subsequent blurring of boundaries as new industrial/scientific/governmental complexes are beginning to emerge. These new networks are associated with knowledge spaces within which these new relationships are actively built and new political-economic forms are experimented with (e.g. incubators, community banks, environmental technologies, social enterprise). Relatedly, new forms of value-generating, formalized labour are emerging. These are not just the policy intermediaries identified above, but also include examples such as new forms of regenerative labour (Waldby and Cooper, 2010), environmental advocates, cultural intermediaries (Molloy and Larner, 2010), social innovators and grassroots entrepreneurs. As the broader debate about 'immaterial labour' (Lazzarato, 2009) underlines, in many of these new areas attributes like communication, affect, opinion, attention and taste are being actively engaged by capital. At the same time, these emergent value generating spaces and subjects are unlikely to follow established patterns of economy, work and career, and are more likely to be 'flex organisations' based on new forms of entrepreneurship, self-employment, contingent labour and/or 'portfolio careers'. Finally and importantly, as Walker and Cooper (2011) have recently shown with reference to the concept of resilience, the developing world often remains the testing ground for these new knowledge spaces and subjects.

Finally, the five Cs are giving rise to new governmental technologies as 'uncertainty' takes precedence over 'risk management'. Whereas risk management technologies were aimed at prevention, and mobilized profiling and calculating strategies in order to contain problems and prevent bad things happening, it is now widely accepted that we live in a world characterized by ethical challenges, moral dilemmas and multiple answers. Risk is not only endemic but it is inexpugnable and ultimately unknowable. Collier (2008) has shown how this shift has pushed the limits of specific forms of calculative practices based on what he calls 'archival-statistical knowledge', and identifies the emergence of 'enactment' as a new approach to understanding and assessing risk. More generally, many of those who model and calculate risks (be these environmental, economic, political or social) are moving away from definitive claims, and increasingly understand themselves to be modelling and calculating uncertainties. As uncertainty takes prominence and marginalizes the established statistical and expert models of risk management, there is also a new emphasis on technologies of deliberation that attempt to deal with the absence of agreement. Both Lisa Adkins (2009) and Jeremy Walker and Melinda Cooper (2011) have argued that this shift underpins the rise of a new strategy of permanent, open-ended responsiveness, one that presupposes new understandings of uncertain futures. Indeed, it is in this context of governing uncertainties that it has even more become feasible to think of environment, economy, security and life in the same frame.

Conclusion

This article engages with recent discussions of the geographies of crisis. While agreeing that this is indeed a period of qualitative change in which there are profound globalized political-economic reconfigurations, I am wary of analyses of new political and governmental processes that resort to totalizing and epochal thinking. I argue instead for an account focused on heterogeneity that accepts and examines the contradictory and co-constitutive processes through which new political and governmental formations are assembled. The article identifies and outlines five arenas – the five Cs of the credit crunch, climate change, China, crusades and cyborgism – that are central to these new formations and require such attention. Of course these are not entirely new arenas, and analysing them does not require brand new theoretical approaches. The point I am trying to make is that each of these arenas is now being understood (or to use Foucauldian language 'problematized') in new ways, with the consequence that they are now being politicized and governmentalized in distinctive new forms. I have also emphasized that in each of these arenas there will inevitably be multiple knowledge forms vying for legitimacy and institutional force.

More generally, this is an argument for process-oriented knowledge practices such as assemblage and policy mobilities that focus on the heterogeneous, productive and sometimes unexpected aspects of power. If crisis and restructuring does indeed involve a 'brake' and a 'break' (Soja, 1999), then not everything will change, and tracing continuities will be as important as understanding disjunctures. For example, it is certainly a mistake to think that neoliberalism is over; each of these arenas remains inflected by the legacies of neoliberal assumptions about the roles of states, markets, communities and individuals. They are also being governed by the ever more sophisticated forms of calculative practices that allow for 'governing at a distance'. But just as neoliberalism was not the only governmental formation present during its eponymous period, it will also be important to identify the ongoing effects of other manifestations of power – for example, neocolonialism, disciplinary power and authoritarianism. Moreover, if we take seriously the need for constitutive and generative analyses it will also be important to consider how diverse efforts to 'resist' and reconfigure these power relations can themselves become part of governmental and political processes.

In sum, the article underlines the continued need to be reflexive about academic knowledge practices and to recognize the political implications of differing geographical analyses. Thanks to Gibson-Graham (2008) and other feminist theorists, we have begun to understand that how we interpret our world not only shapes what we do but also how we do it. In the context of the contemporary crisis, it remains important to make space for alternative geographical imaginaries that open up new 'politics of the possible' (Lewis, 2009). Assemblage thinking is one example of a range of analyses that draw on 'weak theory' (Connell, 2007), by identifying, accepting and examining multiple, uneven and paradoxical expressions of governmental and political power. Indeed, arguably such approaches are particularly relevant at times of generalized crisis and uncertainty such as that we are currently experiencing. If this is indeed again 'new times', then such careful conceptual, political and empirical work is needed and there is no shortage of important questions for geographers to engage with in the period ahead.

Acknowledgements

The five Cs were initially formulated in conversation with Don Kerr. They were further developed with help from Alexandra Dobrowolsky and Richard Devlin, and in a class called 'After Neoliberalism?' which I taught at the University of Frankfurt in 2009. Earlier versions of the article received useful comments at the Conference of Irish Geographers (Maynooth, Ireland, 2010) and a workshop on Critical Appraisals of Global Governance (Lucerne, Switzerland, 2010), and from Mark Jackson, Bronwen Morgan, Mark Duffield, Adam Dixon, Maria Fannin, Julie MacLeavy, J.-D. Dewsbury, Malcolm Fairbrother and Rachel Kumar-Simon. Thanks also to Rob Kitchin and Richard Le Heron for their editorial support.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Notes

1 Thanks to Bronwen Morgan for alerting me to this.
2 Thanks to Maria Fannin for introducing me to these debates.
3 Carbon, cities and children are among those proposed by various readers and commentators.

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