The Handbook of Neoliberalism

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AN INTRODUCTION TO NEOLIBERALISM

Simon Springer, Kean Birch and Julie MacLeavy

Welcome to The Handbook of Neoliberalism, a volume that offers the most complete overview of the field to date. The compiled chapters explore the phenomenon of neoliberalism by examining the range of ways that it has been theorized, promoted, critiqued, and put into practice in a variety of geographical locations and institutional frameworks. Neoliberalism is easily one of the most powerful concepts to emerge within the social sciences in the last two decades, and the number of scholars who are now writing about this dynamic and unfolding process of socio-spatial transformation is nothing short of astonishing. Even more surprising, though, is that there has, until now, not been an attempt to provide a wide-ranging volume that engages with the multiple registers in which neoliberalism has evolved. The Handbook of Neoliberalism was assembled with the specific goal of changing that, and accordingly it intends to serve as an essential guide to this vast intellectual landscape.

With contributions from over 60 leading authors, this handbook offers a systematic overview of neoliberalism by addressing ongoing and emerging debates, as well as charting new trajectories for future research. With this volume we have sought to bring the diverse scope and wide-ranging coverage of neoliberalism under a single roof by incorporating an expansive agenda. Most of the edited volumes and monographs on neoliberalism that have been published to date have a very specific thematic focus, either on particular empirical case studies, or by attempting to wrestle with a specific theoretical concern. In contrast, The Handbook of Neoliberalism aims to provide a comprehensive survey of the field by offering an interdisciplinary and global perspective. Our authors are working in multiple domains at institutions all around the world, which enables a thorough examination of how neoliberalism has been taken up in diverse contexts and how it is understood by social scientists working from different theoretical perspectives. Our goal for this volume is to advance the established and emergent debates surrounding neoliberalism. As a field of study, neoliberalism has grown exponentially over the past two decades, coinciding with the meteoric rise of this phenomenon as a hegemonic ideology, a state form, a policy and programme, an epistemology, and a version of governmentality.

Neoliberalism is a slippery concept, meaning different things to different people. Scholars have examined the relationships between neoliberalism and a vast array of conceptual categories, including cities (Hackworth 2007; MacLeavy 2008a), gender (Brown 2004; MacLeavy 2011; Oza 2006), citizenship (Ong 2006; Sparke 2006), discourse (Springer 2012, 2016), biotechnology (Birch 2006, 2008), sexualities (Oswin 2007; Richardson 2005), labour (Aguiar and Herod 2006;
Peck 2002), development (Hart 2002; Peet 2007), migration (Lawson 1999; Mitchell 2004),
nature (Bakker 2005; McCarthy and Prudham 2004), race (Goldberg 2009; Haylett 2001),
homelessness (Klodawsky 2009; May et al. 2005), and violence (Springer 2009, 2015) to name
but a few. Beyond the academy, activist circles have also seen neoliberalism replace earlier labels
that referred to specific politicians and/or political projects (Larner 2009). The term entered
global circulation following the Zapatistas’ ‘encounters’ with neoliberalism in Chiapas, Mexico,
beginning with the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994. Neoliberal-
ism has since become a means of identifying a seemingly ubiquitous set of market-oriented poli-
cies as being largely responsible for a wide range of social, political, ecological and economic
problems. Given the diversity of domains in which neoliberalism can be found, the term is fre-
quently used somewhat indiscriminately and quite pejoratively to mean anything ‘bad’, charac-
terizing different social processes (e.g. privatization), institutions (e.g. free markets), and social
actors (e.g. corporate power) (Boas and Gans-Morse 2009). While there is a strategic reason for
such usage, particularly in terms of mobilizing it as a ‘radical political slogan’ (Peck 2004), such
lack of specificity reduces its capacity as an analytic frame. If neoliberalism is to serve as a way of
understanding the transformation of society over the last few decades then the concept is in need
of unpacking.

At a very base level we can say that when we make reference to ‘neoliberalism’, we are
generally referring to the new political, economic, and social arrangements within society that
emphasize market relations, re-tasking the role of the state, and individual responsibility. Most
scholars tend to agree that neoliberalism is broadly defined as the extension of competitive
markets into all areas of life, including the economy, politics, and society (see Amable 2011;
Bourdieu 1998; Cerny 2008; Crouch 2011; Davies 2014; Dean 2012; Harvey 2005; Mirowski
2013; Mudge 2008; Styhre 2014). Key to this process is an attempt to instill a series of values
and social practices in subjects (MacLeavy 2008b). This process can have lasting effects by
virtue of being embedded in practices of governance at the local level, which often leads to a
sense of neoliberalism being everywhere (Peck and Tickell 2002). It is nonetheless important
to attune our analysis to the ways in which neoliberal ideas resonate with a diverse range of
state projects, policy objects, and socio-political imaginaries. Contra the prevailing view of
neoliberalism as a pure and static end-state, geographical enquiry has sought to illuminate
neoliberalism as a dynamic and unfolding process (Peck and Tickell 2002; Brenner et al. 2010;
England and Ward 2007; Springer 2010). The concept of ‘neoliberalization’ is thus seen as
more appropriate to geographical theorizations inasmuch as it acknowledges the mutated and
mongrelized forms of neoliberalism as it travels around our world. Yet by recognizing that
there is no pure or paradigmatic version of neoliberalism, and instead a series of geopolitically
distinct hybrids (Peck 2004), we contribute once more to the difficulty of achieving consensus
on a conceptual definition of what ‘neoliberalism’ actually means. In many ways, this is the
crux of the matter when it comes to scholarship on neoliberalism. There is no shortage of
writing on the topic, but how can we be entirely certain that we are engaging in the same
conversation?

One could argue that the concept of neoliberalism is simply too amorphous to pin down as
the contradictions between paradigm and particularities can perhaps never be fully reconciled
(Barnett 2005; Castree 2006). Yet rather than ending the discussion on what neoliberalism
means, particularly in terms of its embodied effects and lived realities, commentaries to this
effect have instead given rise to some very different, yet also necessarily overlapping, conceptu-
alizations of neoliberalism as scholars have attempted to overcome the conceptual impasse. In
this very vein, Stephanie Mudge (2008) has attempted a synthesis of the various perspectives on
neoliberalism, as she considers it as a sui generis ideological system born of historical processes.
of struggle and collaboration in three worlds: intellectual, bureaucratic, and political. These three formations of neoliberalism correspond with Wendy Larner’s (2000) earlier inquiry that looks to ideology, policy, and governmentality as the three prongs of neoliberalism’s theorization. More recently Ward and England (2007) have expanded upon Larner’s reading by separating the category of ‘policy’ into ‘policy and programme’ and ‘state form’. Meanwhile, Simon Springer (2012) has attempted to merge these various understandings, and particularly the divisions between Marxist and Foucauldian readings, through a notion of neoliberalism as a discourse. While it will take time to see whether these attempts prove theoretically useful, for now we can say that the successful mobilization of neoliberalism as a research analytic requires us to emphasize its various roles in shaping state strategies, innovative modes of governance, and new forms of political subjectivity. It demands that we be alert to neoliberalism’s different yet somehow unified effects in different spaces and at different times. In seeking to understand neoliberalism as emergent in and through a spectrum of connectivity we ought not to assume that there are implied subject-effects of its programmes of rule. Instead, we can problematize how subjects are being (re)made through neoliberal politics and the discourses that have come to be associated with its ‘messy actualities’ (Larner 2000: 14). We could even go further in examining the processes through which the concept of the human subject as ‘an autonomous, individualized, self-directing, decision-making agent at the heart of policy-making’ (Bondi 2005: 499) has been called into being by neoliberalism. Attempting to understand how far this vision of neoliberal subject-making is recognized and assimilated, as well as exploring levels of resistance and refraction, is now one of the key goals of scholarship on neoliberalism.

Although subject formation has arisen as a primary concern, it is not to be taken for granted. Indeed, through a geographical lens of articulation and variegation neoliberalism suddenly seems less assured (Brenner et al. 2010; Springer 2011). Historically speaking, there are also limitations to the contemporary view of neoliberalism as a monolithic and complete project. We can start by appreciating that neoliberalism actually started life as a fringe utopian idea (Peck 2008), where it was only over the course of a number of false starts and setbacks that it eventually emerged as an orthodox doctrine. The ideas and policies that are now standard practice in the contemporary neoliberal toolkit surely seemed incomprehensible 60 years ago as the dust settled in the aftermath of World War II. At that time, the global North was enamoured with Keynesian economics, while the ideologies of the right, thanks to the Nazis, became completely anathema to the spirit of the time. This makes the contemporary dominance of neoliberalism all the more surprising. So what happened in the intervening years to allow neoliberalism to become the contemporary ‘planetary vulgate’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001)? Scholars like George (1999), Duménil and Lévy (2004), and Harvey (2005) have all sketched the unfolding of neoliberalism, while Peck (2008) has provided a detailed analysis of the ‘prehistories’ of ‘protoneoliberalism’. The common theme among all of these accounts is an acceptance of a historical lineage to the development of neoliberalism, that it came from somewhere and that its trajectories were largely purposeful. It is for this very reason that neoliberalism is typically associated with a specific group of influential thinkers, politicians, and policy-makers from the last century, including Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, James Buchanan, Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, and Alan Greenspan. The claims advanced by this group insist that the market is the most efficient and moral institution for the organization of human affairs, which seems to suggest that it could and perhaps even should replace all other institutions (e.g. family, state, community, and society) as the primary mechanism for producing, promoting, and preserving social order. In particular, neoliberals have argued that the market should replace any collectivist forms of planning, where socialist and redistributive policies are seen as key impediments (Hayek 1944/2001; Friedman 1962). Consequently, neoliberalism entails both positive assumptions (i.e. the market...
is more efficient than other institutions) and normative assumptions (i.e. the market should replace other institutions because it is both more efficient and liberating).

Understanding neoliberalism necessarily requires unravelling its complex geographies, diverse intellectual histories, and multifarious political implications, rather than simply equating it with one particular school of thought (e.g. Austrian, Freiburg, or Chicago schools), or with neoclassical economics more generally (Birch 2015; Mirowski 2013). There is a complexity to neoliberalism that has sustained it as an area of scholarship for well over a decade now. Throughout this volume we attempt to make greater sense of the ways in which it has been taken up in various registers and the effects that have been and are continuing to be produced as a result of its particular brand of marked-based logic. The assembled chapters will, we hope, afford greater conceptual clarity into what neoliberalism is all about. Our intention is to provide a better sense of the field for those who are new to the study of neoliberalism, but also to offer sufficient depth and new insights for those who are already well immersed. We have organized the discussion around seven key themes: 1) origins; 2) political implications; 3) social tensions; 4) knowledge productions; 5) spaces; 6) natures and environments; and 7) aftermaths. While this offers an organizing principle for the volume, attentive readers will recognize that there are a multitude of important connections to be found between the various sections. The book could be read cover to cover, but we actually encourage readers to jump in wherever they feel inclined, and, from there, to chart their own unique paths through the chapters. Doing so will, we suspect, enable new insights and connections to be drawn.

Starting at the beginning, in the first section on ‘Origins’, we hope to guide readers through a discussion of how something called ‘neoliberalism’ came to be, detailing its early formation and eventual uptake across a diverse range of economic matrixes, social contexts, policy environments, and institutional settings. Matthew Eagleton-Pierce kicks things off by asking ‘What is new about neoliberalism?’, where he takes us through an argument that positions neoliberalism as the latest ideological ‘spirit’ in the history of capitalism. By interpreting neoliberalism as an ethos of sorts, Eagleton-Pierce is able to caution us on imputing neoliberalism as a bounded concept with historical coherence by dissecting the contradictions between theory and practice. Edward Nik-Khah and Robert Van Horn then trace the rise of the Chicago School of Economics and the inordinate influence it has had on post-World War II economics in the USA. The chapter isn’t exclusively concerned with the US setting, though, as it examines the relationship and rich interplay that existed between the Chicago School and their European counterparts in the Mont Pelerin Society. Nik-Khah and Van Horn highlight three crucial figures – Milton Friedman, Aaron Director, and George Stigler – in their analysis, illustrating the views of these pivotal neoliberals and particularly their thinking on the appropriate role of the economist. William K. Carroll and J.P. Sapinski then expand the lens by focusing their attention on the transnational capitalist class, and particularly its intersections with neoliberalism and the deep lineages between the two. Their chapter traces the development of capitalist internationalism, initially within the International Chamber of Commerce, then within the Mont Pelerin Society, and later within the World Economic Forum, as sites for establishing a neoliberal consensus in a transnational process of policy-planning. In their chapter, Kim England and Kevin Ward reflect on the diversity of approaches to theorizing neoliberalism, focusing on the work of scholars from two main traditions: political economy approaches emphasizing a ‘process’ perspective and post-structuralists emphasizing a ‘contingency’ perspective. Both traditions illustrate the need for hybridity in any account of neoliberalism. In the following chapter, Dieter Plehwe provides another way to analyse neoliberalism as discourse, in this case as hegemony. Here Plehwe stresses studying the evolution of neoliberal ideas and discourses in their historical context so that scholars avoid crude forms of reductionism whereby neoliberalism is equated with one policy or
Another set of concerns arise in Nick Lewis’s chapter, in which he theorizes neoliberalism in terms of the Foucauldian notion of governmentality. In his chapter, Lewis is particularly interested in deploying governmentality in the conceptualization of a ‘poststructuralist political economy’ that can grapple with neoliberalism as a rationality and technology that informs, shapes and disciplines individual subjectivities. Following this, Phillip O’Neill and Sally Weller present a critique of the construction and use of the idea of neoliberalism. Their title ‘Neoliberalism in question’ echoes Andrew Sayer’s (1989) critique of post-Fordism to suggest that the idea is overly flexible and insufficiently specialized. They argue that the range and fluidity of definitions of neoliberalism tend to dull academic argument and advocate a more robust examination of and debate about the nature of contemporary socio-economic change and the issues at stake in explaining continuity and change. Stephanie Mudge concludes this section with a consideration of how best to conceptualize neoliberalism for social scientific purposes. There is, she argues, no completely satisfactory alternative for this term in the social sciences at present. And for this reason, she makes the case for a relational, meso-level approach to studying neoliberalism as a multifaceted social fact.

The second section draws the reader’s attention to the variety of ‘Political implications’ attendant to neoliberal reform. Ian Bruff begins by assessing the connections between neoliberalism and authoritarianism, recalling that state-directed coercion insulated from democratic pressures is central to the creation and maintenance of this politico-economic order, defending it against impulses towards greater equality and democratization. While neoliberalism has long contained authoritarian tendencies, Bruff argues that this character has become significantly more prominent since the outbreak of global capitalist crisis in 2008, particularly in the European Union, where neoliberalizing processes have intensified in recent years. In the next chapter Katharyne Mitchell brings questions of citizenship to centre stage, where she recalls it as processual, formative, and relational. She argues that the speed associated with fast and mobile citizenship often entails the slow-down or stoppage of movement for others, and her main objective is accordingly to identify the ways in which the spatial effects of neoliberalization impact citizenship formation and the relations between individuals and populations around the globe. Douglas Hill, Nave Wald, and Tess Guiney tackle the question of development and neoliberalism, examining the changes that have taken place in the post–World War II era, where neoliberal ideas have come to pervade in every nook and cranny of how mainstream development is currently practised. Jason Hickel then looks to so-called ‘free trade’ and the limits of democracy, questioning how both are situated under neoliberalism, given the demonstrable lack of freedoms that exist for individuals. While corporate freedoms are now firmly entrenched, the rhetoric of ‘free trade’ debases the very things that promote real human freedoms – such as the right of workers to organize, equal access to decent public services, and safeguards for a healthy environment. Hickel argues that these are cast as somehow anti-democratic, having been reframed as ‘red tape’ or as ‘barriers to investment’, thus positioning neoliberalism’s banner of ‘freedom’ as an assault on democracy. In the following chapter Simon Springer argues that neoliberalism exhibits a distinct relational connection with violence, so much so that we might actually productively consider neoliberalism itself as a particular form of violence. Promises of a free market utopia are confronted with the stark dystopian realities that exist in a growing number of countries where Springer demonstrates how neoliberalization has not resulted in greater peace and prosperity, but in a profound and unmistakable encounter with violence. Nicholas Kiersey then surveys the concept of biopolitics and its situation within ongoing processes of sociological transformation. To explore these issues, his chapter contends that we should bring an innovative attitude to our reading of Foucault’s few rudimentary remarks on neoliberal capitalist subjectivity, integrating more fine-grained methods of ‘postliberal’ economic analysis from Autonomist Marxism, among other.
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sources. In the next chapter, Julie Cupples and Kevin Glynn look to the conjunction between neoliberalism and the emergence of a highly elaborated and complex convergent media environment marked by rapid technological development, digitalization, miniaturization, and mobilization. Their chapter explores the clash between top–down and bottom–up forces within this complex moment, wherein citizens, activists and conventionally marginalized populations are forging new modes of media consumption/production and devising more democratic ways to communicate, express their views and challenge hegemonic and neoliberal structures of power. In the final chapter of this section, Vlad Mykhinenko looks at resilience in relation to neoliberalism. While he adopts a sceptical perspective on the implications of this discourse and its capacity to recapitulate neoliberal ideas rather than offer a systemic break from them, he also recognizes that resilience theory’s insistence on the value of redundant capacities for shock absorption and stress resistance has progressive potential.

Next we turn our attention towards ‘Social tensions’. Although cognizant of the false dichotomy that separating the social from the political implies, we nonetheless felt it was a useful organizing principle to try to tease out societal strains as distinct from political effects. In this third section of the volume we set out to cover major identity categories such as race, gender, class and sexuality, while also focusing on neoliberal consequences for health, welfare, and patterns of punitive reform. David J. Roberts begins this section with an examination of the co-constitution of race and neoliberalism. His chapter re-articulates an argument he made (with Mahtani) that early approaches to race and neoliberalism were problematic insofar as they tended to focus on the racialized outcomes of neoliberal reforms (Roberts and Mahtani 2010). While neoliberalism is saturated with race, it also modifies the way that race and racism is understood and experienced in contemporary society. Recognition of this, he suggests, has enabled recent moves beyond the treatment of race as a set of fixed immutable categories and an emergent focus on racialization as an ongoing and evolving process. The manner through which gender comes to have meaning and is experienced is the focus of the next chapter by Christina Scharff. Scharff considers what kind of gendered subjects are compatible with the free, self-sufficient, and self-advancing subjects of neoliberalism. Honing in on the constitution of young women as ideal neoliberal subjects in contemporary western societies, she explores the contradictions, exclusions and politics of neoliberal gendered subjectivity using case study research with female classical musicians. Sealing Cheng follows this with a discussion of how neoliberal governance and subject-making are contested in the realm of sexuality. While scholars generally agree that neoliberalism varies across locations, examining sexuality as a ‘dense transfer point for relations of power’ (Foucault 1990: 130) illuminates the paradoxes and contradictions of neoliberalism. Cheng asks ‘What kind of sexuality does neoliberalism endorse, let be, or penalize?’ and seeks to identify what she calls ‘the sexual limits of neoliberalism’ through analysis of the culture wars and policy debates around sex, ranging from gay marriage to sex trafficking. In the next chapter, Matthew Sparke considers the way in which both macro forms of neoliberal governance and micro practices of neoliberal governmentality come together in context-contingent ways to shape health policies, health systems and embodied health outcomes. He argues that neoliberalization is leading to extremely unequal but interconnected regimes of biopolitics and necropolitics globally. In drawing attention to the connections between these different regimes, Sparke takes us beyond static statistical accounts of how inequality maps onto ill-health in particular data-set defined populations. He illuminates how neoliberal governance comes to have ill-effects on health, as well as how efforts to respond to ill-health remain dominated by neoliberal market logics and language. Julie MacLeavy’s chapter follows this and examines the neoliberal impulses underlying the restructuring of contemporary welfare states across the developed world, and elsewhere. Her particular focus is on how a neoliberalized approach to the broader political economy has been
translated in an age of austerity and used to legitimate cuts to central and local government budgets, welfare services and benefits, and the privatization of public resources. Using the UK as an illustrative case, MacLeavy traces the rise of a more punitive policy approach in which self-sufficiency and individual requirements to work are emphasized, and points towards the consequences of the neoliberalization of welfare for different social groups. Ben Jackson then turns our attention to labour, which has been central to the concerns of neoliberalism from its ideological inception to the roll-out of neoliberal policies in government in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. His chapter focuses, in particular, on the way in which neoliberal theory has sought to treat labour as a commodity to be bought and sold like any other on the market.

A distinctive feature of neoliberal thinking is the view that there is no such thing as market-based coercion in labour relations, only coercive interventions into the market sponsored by the state and by powerful, state-backed unions. The chapter investigates the ideological foundations and policy implications of this stance, which has led neoliberals to adopt a sceptical pose towards labour market regulation and collective bargaining. In the next chapter, Max Haiven explores the relationship of the commons to neoliberalism. He traces both neoliberalism and the idea of the commons as stemming from the crisis of post-war Keynesianism and outlines the ways in which, over the past twenty years, neoliberalism has come to adopt and co-opt certain aspects of the reality and the idea of the commons in an effort to reproduce itself. Turning to a new generation of radical theorizations (and practices) of the commons, including Stefano Harney and Fred Moten’s (2013) concept of the ‘undercommons’ and Silvia Federici’s (2012) historically informed conceptualization of the commons as the fabric of a struggle over social reproduction, Haiven suggests that we must hold fast to the conceptual and actual power of the commons to resist and confront neoliberalism, but in ways that attend to the potential for co-optation and the need to retain a broader analysis of capitalism. Peter Graefe then concludes the section. His chapter provides an account of how the social economy translates or relates to a broader neoliberal project or programme. Are we witnessing the roll-out of new institutions and governmentalities so as to extend market metrics deeper into social provisions, and, indeed, into organizations previously marked by non-market cultures and rationalities, or is the attention to the social economy more akin to creating flanking mechanisms to compensate for problems in social reproduction that might hobble the neoliberal project? Considering both Foucauldian and regulationist accounts of the development of the social economy, Graefe argues that there is a tendency to overstate processes that reproduce neoliberalism, and to ignore the potential for the social economy to serve as an element of a settlement that might break with neoliberalism. This is not so much a strategy of introducing agency so as to then adopt an excessive voluntarism, but, he suggests, one of keeping an analytical door open to possibilities of change.

The fourth section explores both the implications of neoliberalism to ‘Knowledge productions’ (Tyfield 2012) and neoliberalism as a particular epistemological order (Mirowski 2013). A recent book by Dardot and Laval (2014), for example, argues that neoliberalism has entailed the reshaping of our subjectivities through the promotion of particular ways of thinking about ourselves ‘economically’; that is, we are encouraged to think of ourselves as business enterprises. It starts with Michael A. Peters discussing the implications of human capital theory to education, especially in relation to Foucault’s notion of homo economicus as being the ‘entrepreneur of the self’. In this chapter, Peters turns to the 2012 discussion between Gary Becker – proponent of human capital theory – and François Ewald about the work of Foucault, especially the contentious claim that Foucault was sympathetic to neoliberalism. Next, Sheila L. Macrine provides a detailed overview of a wider set of ‘pedagogies of neoliberalism’, or ideas promoted by neoliberals ranging from deregulation through the rule of law to economic education, thereby going beyond a narrow focus on economics. She outlines the different neoliberal pedagogies, with the
aim of providing readers with the means to critically unpack the assumptions underpinning neoliberalism as a pedagogy. In his chapter, Kean Birch focuses on a specific form of economic knowledge – financial economics – and its site of reproduction – the business school. Birch notes an ambiguity between critiques of neoliberalism, which tend to focus on markets, and the dominant business form in the neoliberal era, namely the monopolistic or oligopolistic corporation. As such, he posits an important role for the business school in the reproduction of neoliberalism through the production and dissemination of economic knowledge that legitimates corporate monopoly, an issue that is often left out of critical analyses of neoliberalism. The following chapter by Russell Prince deals with broader notions of neoliberal knowledge dissemination, focusing specifically on neoliberal policy transfer. In the chapter, Prince discusses three perspectives of such policy transfer: first, as the result of coercion or consent among policy elites; second, as the result of newly established policy parameters; and third, as the result of assemblages of neoliberal technologies. Neoliberalism has significant implications for other forms of knowledge production, including science and innovation as David Tyfield illustrates in his chapter. Tyfield argues that science and innovation are integral to the emergence of neoliberalism by providing legitimation for political economic restructuring (one example being claims about knowledge-based economies replacing manufacturing-based ones). At the same time, neoliberalism has led to the wholesale transformation of science and innovation through new practices of knowledge enclosure, commodification and asset creation. This entanglement of knowledge and practice is central to Michael R. Glass’s chapter, in which he discusses the concept of performativity; specifically, how neoliberal ideas are performed as neoliberal practices. As Glass argues, neoliberalism is always (necessarily) incomplete and in the process of being performed, meaning that there is always an opportunity for alternatives to arise. In a similar although theoretically distinct vein, Heather Whiteside charts the co-evolution of conceptions of austerity and policy manifestations of this theory of fiscal restraint since the 1970s, but with a particular focus on the period following the global financial crisis. Whiteside shows how knowledge (in this instance, theories of austerity and fiscal restraint) has a particular temporality, spatiality and institutional dimension. The final chapter in this section is by Tom Slater, who adopts a focus on the production of ‘ignorance’ rather than knowledge, or agnotology. In order to do this, Slater analyses recent debates on the UK housing crisis, especially the policy discourses emanating from right-wing think tanks. He argues that the dominance of neoliberalism can be explained partly by the right-wing think tank mastery of ‘decision-based evidence making’, which requires exposure and critical analysis. With this section our intention is to demonstrate how neoliberalism operates through various frames and framings of knowledge, and draw attention to the wider capillaries of power in neoliberalism. Processes of education and the impact on the university and pedagogy are perhaps the most obvious domains, but we also seek to understand how things like innovation, policy ideas, and economic knowledges are produced, disseminated and performed, coming to constitute specific forms of neoliberalism. More embodied forms of knowledge are also covered by thinking through performativity, while the role of ignorance in relation to neoliberalization is highlighted as an important concept to consider.

The fifth section highlights the material implications of neoliberalism. It is at this point that we look specifically at the ‘Spaces’ in which the phenomenon operates. Given that human geography has been one of the most important disciplinary players in the articulation of critiques against neoliberalism, we wanted to devote specific attention to the spatial patterns of neoliberalism. Such a focus is critically important in understanding both its operation and ongoing power. We look first to the urban and rural frames to tease out similarities and discontinuities, before then considering the notion of heartlands and peripheries at a more global scale. Roger Keil begins this section. His chapter demonstrates that the current ‘urban age’ – often portrayed...
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as an almost natural demographic, morphological and economic force – has, in many ways, been a product of, and has been productive of, neoliberalization. While ‘urbanism’ and ‘neoliberalism’ are mostly open-ended ideological formations, Keil describes how urbanization and neoliberalization are material and discursive processes that lead to real (and imagined) constellations through which modern capitalist societies are being reproduced. Cristóbal Kay follows with an account of neoliberalism as related to rural development. He describes how the neoliberal paradigm has resulted in a profound restructuring of the agricultural sector and rural spaces. This transformation of the countryside has not gone uncontested and Kay also discusses some rural counter-movements contesting neoliberalism. Bob Jessop’s chapter then adopts a regulation- and state-theoretical variegated capitalism approach to the genealogy and subsequent development of neoliberalism. He distinguishes four kinds of neoliberal project: post-socialist system transformation, principled neoliberal regime shifts, pragmatic neoliberal policy adjustment, and neoliberal structural adjustment regimes. The heartlands of neoliberalism, Jessop suggests, are characterized by principled neoliberal regime shifts, typified by the USA and UK but with variations in Canada, Æire, Australia, New Zealand, and Iceland. Warwick E. Murray and John Overton follow with a consideration of how the peripheries of the global economy have been deeply engaged in, and affected by, neoliberalism. Their chapter details how neoliberal reforms were encouraged and often forced on countries removed from the centres of global power, including peripheral developing economies, as in sub-Saharan Africa or Latin America, as well as more affluent New World economies, for example Australia and New Zealand, and the consequences in terms of uneven development. Having considered the implications of neoliberalism for core–periphery relations, we then look to geopolitics and territorial borders as particularly salient expressions of the complementary processes that reflect and reproduce a world of gross inequalities. Susan M. Roberts sketches a picture of neoliberal geopolitics, reviewing the ways in which geographers and others have considered the relations between neoliberalism and geopolitical power relations. The chapter considers the recent US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the ongoing use of drone strikes by the USA as examples, where, broadly speaking, the emphasis is on the relations between the generalization of the logics of the market and ways of viewing and engaging the world premised on the use of force. In the following chapter, Joseph Nevins observes that while the neoliberal era has seen a marked increase in transboundary mobility by the relatively affluent, it has also seen a simultaneous hardening of territorial boundaries for those deemed less than desirable migrants by receiving countries. Rae Dufty-Jones concludes the section in a more intimate frame with a consideration of the domesticating implications of neoliberalism in terms of its penetration of the home. Her account reflects on housing as not just a static tool in neoliberal governing strategies, but also an arena in which the movements of neoliberalism can be witnessed and even potentially subverted.

How neoliberalism is entangled with ‘Natures and environments’ is the focus of the sixth section. The burgeoning literature on the neoliberalization of nature and environment (e.g. Castree 2008, 2010; McCarthy and Prudham 2004; Moore 2015; etc.), as it has come to be known, forms part of broader debates about the idea that we are living through a geological era best described as the ‘Anthropocene’ – that is, an era shaped by human action, especially human industrial development. To start this section, Rosemary–Claire Collard, Jessica Dempsey and James Rowe unpack the relationship between neoliberalism and the environment, especially as it relates to shifting regulatory frameworks instituted to govern both access to and use of natural resources. According to Collard et al., this involves environmental re-regulation rather than deregulation, covering new regulations that enable greater exploitation of the environment, innovation in private and voluntary governance, and development of market-based solutions to environmental problems. One key example of a market-based solution is climate emissions
trading, the starting point for Larry Lohmann’s chapter. However, Lohmann does more than focus on emissions trading; more importantly, he considers how the climate is understood in the neoliberal era and how this differs from previous periods. Consequently, he is able to show how the ‘environment’ is constructed in contrast to ‘society’, and the reasons for this and for changing conceptions. Following this, Matthew Huber highlights how neoliberalism is correlated to a particular political economy of energy, especially in the entanglement of neoliberalism and the ‘energy crisis’ in the 1970s. By means of extension, Huber also argues that neoliberalism is implicated in broader energy developments like the regulation of oil drilling (e.g. Deepwater Horizon) and household energy consumption. A related set of issues arise with other natural resources, as Alex Loftus and Jessica Budds highlight with water and Jamey Essex with agriculture. Starting with water, Loftus and Budds argue that the neoliberalization of water has four different moments involving privatization, corporatization, financialization and marketization of this vital resource. With agriculture and food, Essex discusses how neoliberalism has profoundly impacted agricultural systems since the 1970s. In particular, he highlights the emergence of a new ‘neoliberal–corporate’ food regime. The section finishes with two chapters concerned with different forms of commodification. First, Maria Fannin discusses the emerging ‘bioeconomy’ involving the transformation of human bodies and their tissues into commodities through new biotechnologies. As she points out, this bioeconomy entails the alignment of neoliberal political economic structures with scientific epistemologies based on the flexibility, competitiveness and promissory nature of biological processes. Second, Sonja Killoran-McKibbin and Anna Zalik discuss the extractive industries, and a specific ‘extractive’ form of neoliberalism. In so doing, they highlight the distinctiveness of the extraction of ‘nature’ and its commodification from other ‘productive’ activities. In this way, Killoran-McKibbin and Zalik seek to problematize the notion of a ‘resource curse’, emphasizing that this curse is not environmental, as commonly conceived, but social and capitalist.

In the last section we look towards the future by exploring the ‘Aftermaths’ of neoliberalism and the possible ways in which we might enable an exit from this now orthodox political economic idea towards more heterodox and alternative modes of organizing our collective lived realities. Neoliberalism continues to have resonant effects in the aftermath of a global financial crisis (Birch and Mykhnenko 2010), reverberations that have been framed in a variety of ways, including ‘zombification’ and by applying a ‘post’ to the concept of neoliberalism. Crucially, though, there is also resistance to neoliberalism and a desire to move on. This section begins with Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy’s unpacking the crisis of neoliberalism. In particular, they trace the failings of neoliberalism both historically and geographically, before focusing in on the latest major crisis culminating in 2008 in the old centres, namely the USA and Europe. They argue that the process of financialization and globalization (and specifically their intersection as financial globalization) led to the construction of a fragile and unwieldy edifice that largely accounts for the crisis of neoliberalism. Manuel B. Aalbers also looks to the financial, but the focus of his chapter is on the complex relation between financial regulation and neoliberalism, where he argues that the label ‘deregulation’ is somewhat misleading. His contention is that actually existing regulation and neoliberalism are not so much market-oriented as they are devoted to the dominance of markets and public life by financialized corporations. James D. Sidaway and Reijer Hendrikse shift gears slightly, by returning our attention to the recent financial crisis, but recognizing diagnoses of the end of neoliberalism as premature. They chart the reformulation of neoliberalism since the crisis, positing that a 3.0 version is now in effect. In a similar vein, Ulrich Brand looks explicitly to the idea of ‘postneoliberalism’. Recognizing that there are multiple conceptualizations of differing scope, complexity, and depth with respect to what might be meant by ‘post’, he traces the origin of the concept to 1990s Latin America in an attempt to find
a common ground in terms of some form of break with specific aspects of ‘neoliberalism’. For some, the recent crisis has meant that any calls for postneoliberalism must account for neoliberalism’s afterlives, where a zombified version has arisen. Japhy Wilson takes this line of critique even further. By tracing the literature on the phenomenon of so-called ‘zombie neoliberalism’, he envisions an even deeper sense of morbidity at the centre of neoliberal philosophy, which he refers to as the ‘neoliberal gothic’. Richard J. White and Colin C. Williams then help us to see how such latent energy for change might be released by looking at the present situation with a new set of eyes, wherein the presence of diverse alternative economic practices suggests alternatives to neoliberalism already exist. Their chapter demonstrates the pervasive nature of alternative (non-commodified) spaces of work and organization within contemporary capitalist society. By highlighting the shallow purchase of capitalism in everyday coping strategies, they focus on ways to harness an economic future that breaks with neoliberalism. Our final chapter in the volume comes from Mark Purcell, who pulls no punches in asking what use we even have for a volume on neoliberalism. Purcell has had enough of neoliberalism, and compels us to think through what it might mean to do away with this discussion and instead focus on what we do want. When we fixate on neoliberalism, on injustice, on inequality, on exploitation, on enclosure, he argues, we ignore justice, equality, free activity, and the common. Our own power must come back into view, so Purcell says ‘no’ to neoliberalism, urging us to realize that we have got better things to do.

While we are certain this volume will not be the final word, we tend to agree with Purcell that neoliberalism has become too dominant a discourse. It is a powerful and thus enchanting logic, where even those of us who oppose its effects have been captivated by its spell and caught up in its web. The Handbook of Neoliberalism seeks to intervene by outlining how theorizations of neoliberalism have evolved over time and by exploring new research agendas, which we hope will inform policy-making and activism moving forward. We acknowledge the important work of existing scholarship on neoliberalism in all its guises, but we want to end by opening up rather than closing down debate on what neoliberalism means and how we deploy this concept in academia, activism, politics, and beyond. A literature is emerging that is critical of the current uses of neoliberalism, both analytically and empirically. In a similar vein to Purcell, Boas and Gans-Morse (2009) have noted the way in which neoliberalism is used to denote very different things, from policies and development models to ideologies and academic paradigms. Similarly, Rajesh Venugopal (2015: 169) has recently argued that neoliberalism is now shouldering ‘an inordinate descriptive and analytical burden in the social sciences’. It is an adjective that can be added to almost anything (e.g. state, space, logic, technologies, discourse, agenda, project, development, governance, regulation). From a slightly different perspective, Barnett (2009) has argued that neoliberalism is a useful ‘straw man’ – or even ‘bogeyman’ – for critical scholars; while others like Terry Flew (2014), Carolyn Hardin (2014), Sean Phelan (2014), Sally Weller and Phillip O’Neill (2014), and Kean Birch (2015) agree that neoliberalism risks ending up as some sort of totalizing rhetorical signifier or trope, rather than a concept we can use to reflect the specificity and particularity of human social life.

By presenting a comprehensive examination of the field, we hope that you will find this edited volume useful as you explore the difficult questions of neoliberalism and its multifarious effects, but most of all we hope it inspires you to find the courage to live differently, to speak out, to chart a new path, to resist, to organize, to refuse, and to always remember that there must definitely are alternatives. We must allow our political imaginations to dream beyond the confines of neoliberalism, to embrace the very real possibility of meaningful transformation and lasting change. Indeed, we present this volume to you in the sincere hope that very soon it will be irrelevant. What we mean by this is that we too desire a world free from the chains of neoliberal ideas, and the sooner this book becomes a historical curiosity the better.
References


An introduction to neoliberalism


