



Neoliberal affects

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Abstract

Claims about neoliberalism and its geographies frequently involve assumptions about the affective life of neoliberalism and/or neoliberal societies. However, existing cultural approaches to neoliberalism as a discursive formation, an ideology or governmentality collapse a concern with affect into a focus on the operation of signifying-subjectifying processes that make ‘neoliberal subjects’. Political economy approaches only make implicit claims about the ‘mood’ of neoliberal societies. In this paper, I argue that collective affects are part of the conditions of formation for particular neoliberalisms and therefore understanding the affective life of neoliberalism is critical to explaining how it emerges, forms and changes. Through examples including the Mont Pelerin Society, the Chicago School of Economics and Thatcherism, I propose a vocabulary that supplements existing approaches by focusing on the *affective conditions* for neoliberalism, specifically the *atmospheres* that are part of the formation of neoliberal reason and the *structures of feeling* that condition how particular neoliberalisms actualize in the midst of other things. The result is a way of discerning neoliberalisms as both conditioned by affects and ‘actually existing’ affectively – as dispersed affective ‘qualities’ or ‘senses’.

Keywords

affect, atmospheres, Foucault, neoliberalism, structures of feeling

I Introduction: ‘A climate’

After returning from the 50th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the Mont Pelerin Society, Milton Friedman reflects on ‘victory’ in the war of ideas. Whilst the ‘regulatory and welfare state’ remained a ‘threat to freedom’ (Friedman and Friedman, 1998: 582), Friedman notes a change in the ‘climate of opinion’ between 1997 and the founding of the Society in 1947. He writes:

To judge from the climate of opinion, we have won the war of ideas. Everyone – left or right – talks about the virtues of markets, private property, competition, and limited government. No doubt the Mont Pelerin Society and its many associates around the world deserve some credit for that change in the climate of opinion, but it derives much more from the sheer force of reality:

the fall of the Berlin wall: the tremendous success of the Far eastern tigers . . . and, more recently, Chile. (Friedman and Friedman, 1998: 582–3)

Writing in the late 1970s a very different writer, with a very different tone, and for very different purposes, hesitated before naming a similar change in ‘climate’. In his influential 1979 analysis of the UK’s ‘swing to the right’, Stuart Hall points to a vague, indefinite, change in ‘climate’ that, for him, accompanies the incorporation of neoliberal themes of anti-collectivism and anti-statism into Thatcherism. In this climate monetarist economic thought grows in acceptability:

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Gradually, in the more hospitable climate of the 1970s, these seeds began to bear fruit. First in the learned journals, then in the senior common rooms, and finally in informal exchanges between the ‘new academics’ and the more ‘sensitive’ senior civil servants, a monetarist version of neo-classical economics came to provide the accepted frame for economic debate. (Hall, 1988: 47)

Friedman and Hall are but two examples of occasions in which collective affects are taken to be part of neoliberalisms – ambiguous affects named vaguely as a gradual ‘change in the climate of opinion’ or a more ‘hospitable climate’ for ideas – affects that are also and at the same time part of other partially connected formations (the series of geo-political shocks and transformations named by Friedman, for example). In this paper I develop this intuition that affects matter to neoliberalism. I argue that collective affects are part of the sites, networks, and flows of neoliberalism – and that, consequently, any attempt to understand ‘actually existing neoliberalism’ (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 353) must learn to sense neoliberalism’s affective spaces. For what is at stake is discerning the *real conditions of emergence* for particular neoliberalisms and the continual *(re)conditioning* of emerged but still in formation neoliberalisms. Neoliberalisms are, then, at once conditioned by multiple collective affects and ‘actually exist’ affectively – they are present as dispersed affective ‘qualities’ or ‘senses’ such as a ‘climate of opinion’ or a ‘more hospitable climate’.

Attending to neoliberalism’s affective life is one way, then, of tracing how neoliberal reason is attached to and invested in as it travels and is *(re)formed*: where we can use the term ‘affect’, to begin with, as a generic descriptor for the ‘feeling of existence’; how a room may have a ‘charged’ atmosphere, the historical present may seem to be animated by a ‘climate’, or a policy may be ‘aspirational’, for example. As these examples indicate, affects are not simply

properties of the individual body and are not somehow a-subjective and pre-individual, or non-representational. Affect as intensive ‘capacities to affect and be affected’ is but one translation of the term, albeit the one that has garnered most critical attention in human geography (see Thrift, 2004; McCormack, 2003; and for critiques Barnett, 2008; Pile, 2010).

As used in this paper, and following Anderson (2014), affect is an umbrella category that encompasses qualitatively distinct ways of organizing the ‘feeling of existence’. Atmospheres, structures of feeling and other pragmatic-contextual translations of the term ‘affect’ are ways in which things become significant and relations are lived. This means that affects are always organized and becoming organized, in ways that likely differ from subjectifying-signifying systems of meaning. However, understanding the geo-historical affects of any ‘polymorphic, hybrid phenomena’ (Peck, 2010: 280) requires that we suspend claims that affective life today is organized in a single, identifiable way – that we live in a ‘age of fear’ or an ‘age of anxiety’. Even a cursory acknowledgment of the complexity of neoliberalism makes absurd any tight homology between particular affects and neoliberalism.

As is now well established, neoliberalism is not a singular, coherent, entity with a simple origin point. As Peck (2010) makes clear, neoliberalism has a series of internal tensions and contradictions. Then, neoliberalism is open to its outsides. It does not only co-exist with them. New hybrids are formed as neoliberal styles of reasoning and techniques encounter diverse political-economic forms and logics of governing. These hybrids are not only doomed attempts to ‘alleviate’ the worst excesses of neoliberalism (Collier, 2012). Roy (2012: 275) puts this well when she stresses the ‘inevitable incompleteness of neoliberalism as well as its constant reinvention’. To compound the challenges for analysis, other socio-spatial formations are themselves already-always affective,

so neoliberal affects will coexist and blur with the affects of weak reciprocity that animated the European liberal welfare state, for example, or the promise of a normative good life that sustained social democracy (Berlant, 2011)

This means that we should treat the term ‘neoliberal affects’ with caution. Neoliberalism is not a catch-all designator for contemporary capitalism and ‘neoliberal affects’ do not simply name a set of identifiable collective emotions. Nor are ‘neoliberal affects’ the point of contact between structure and subject, in which an all-powerful and already-constituted neoliberalism determines what is felt. Rather, I use the term ‘neoliberal affects’ in two ways, both of which involve particular translations of my starting definition of affect as the ‘feeling of existence’. First, ‘neoliberal affects’ refer to the *atmospheres* that envelope and animate neoliberal reason as it emerges, circulates and changes. Second, ‘neoliberal affects’ refer to the *structures of feeling* that in enigmatic ways accompany the translation of neoliberal reason into policies and projects. Whilst this begs the question of what neoliberal reason is, which I will come to in the next section, what it does is to make affects parts of *and* conditions for neoliberal reason. My aim, in short, is to articulate some of the collective affects of/for neoliberalism specific to the UK and USA, without reproducing a totalizing account of the omnipresence of neoliberalism, and whilst offering a conceptual vocabulary designed to enable a conjunctural analysis of how neoliberal affects varied in neoliberalism’s ‘other birthplaces’ (Peck, 2010: 39) and differ across its current ‘socio-spatial frontiers’ (2010: 6).

The paper proceeds in three sections. Through a reading of Michel Foucault’s 1978–9 lecture series *The Birth of Biopolitics*, I emphasize in Section II how neoliberal reason exists and happens in the midst of a range of affects. My emphasis is on the life of neoliberal reason, that is, those affects that saturate the formation, circulation, articulation and translation

of neoliberal reason. Here I distinguish my emphasis on affect from other ways of doing a cultural analysis of neoliberalism. Through examples including the Mont Pelerin Society, the Chicago School of Economics and Thatcherism, the remainder of the paper proposes a vocabulary for understanding neoliberalism as conditioned by, and actually existing as, *atmospheres* that are part of the formation of neoliberal reason (Section III) and *structures of feeling* that fold into how neoliberalisms actualize in the midst of other things (Section IV).

The paper aims to supplement cultural analyses of neoliberalism. Whilst there are significant differences and tensions in how representation and signification are understood, cultural work on neoliberalism has been primarily concerned with specifying the effects of signifying-subjectifying processes. The emphasis has been on how neoliberalism as an economic-political formation is discursively or ideologically articulated and expressed, in part through the semantic construction of various supposedly neoliberal things (bodies, identities, subjectivities, and so on). This is important and necessary work. A concern with affect is not other to a concern with signifying-subjectifying mechanisms. But, it is to recognize them as but one form/process of mediation, inseparable from a Euro-Modern version of ‘culture’. What a concern with neoliberal affects does, then, is to multiple the forms/processes of mediation by attending to how the ‘feel of existence’ is conditioned and conditions.

II Affect and theories of neoliberalism

Whatever kind of thing neoliberalism is taken to be (Gilbert, 2013), claims are frequently made about the connection between it and contemporary affective life. Very often, this involves claims that the neoliberal present has something like a commonly felt and identifiable mood, normally of fear and anxiety aligned to the

insecurities of lives lived precariously amidst a ‘generalised and heightened sense of expectancy of what has not yet come’ (Clough and Wise, 2011: 2). Typically, neoliberalism is equated with the contemporary moment/form of capitalism. This has led to a flurry of attempts to diagnose an affective economy in which intensive capacities are captured within a new regime of capital accumulation oriented to ‘affect itself’ and characterized by the dominance of ‘affective labour’ (Clough, 2008). Whilst these diagnoses remind us of the patterning of affective life and its imbrication with processes of commodification (Nast, 2006), they nevertheless risk reproducing what Larner (2003) and others have identified as the totalizing effect of the neoliberal formulation. A variant of this approach, that likewise presumes the existence and coherence of neoliberalism, attempts to map its affective damages. Consider, for example, the following claim by Hall and O’Shea (2013: 6, emphasis in original):

The *structural* consequences of neoliberalism – the individualisation of everyone, the privatisation of public troubles and the requirement to make competitive choices at every turn – has been paralleled by an upsurge in feelings of insecurity, anxiety, stress and depression.

In these analyses, attempts are made to establish a relation between neoliberalism as economic-political formation and changes over time in the occurrence of individually felt but shared moods (e.g. Dardot and Laval [2014] on the relation between depression and the naturalization of competition). Whilst this research is timely and important, neoliberalism acts as the starting point of analysis, is given a causal role, and becomes the dominant framing context. Neoliberalism is made into a ‘big Leviathan’ that determines affective life: a ‘macro-structure or explanatory background against which other things can be understood’ (Collier, 2012: 186).

What this work does emphasize, however, is neoliberalism’s affective life. Indeed, most

approaches to neoliberalism make some kind of implicit claim about affect and how neoliberalism reorders contemporary affective life. For example, Harvey (2005: 82) gestures towards how, in the meeting of variants of neoliberalism and neoconservatism in the contemporary USA, a ‘paranoid style of politics’ and an emphasis on ‘morality’ compensate for a potential ‘breakdown of all bonds of solidarity and a condition verging on social anarchy and nihilism’. Even if only in the background to political economy analyses, such asides and assumptions appeal to a kind of affectivity in common. Harvey (2005: 81) claims, for example, that industrial democracies are characterized by a ‘mood’ of ‘helplessness and anxiety’. Perhaps in at least some Marxist political economy work there is an unconscious echo of a tradition of Marxist literary analysis that foregrounded affect as an index of shared embeddedness in a dynamic geo-historical present (see Berlant, 2011).

By contrast, existing cultural approaches focus explicitly on one way neoliberal affects are organized: through signifying-subjectifying systems of meaning. In doing so, they move from general claims about ‘mood’ towards specifying *one* of the particular ways in which ‘capacities to affect and be affected’ are mediated. Consider, for example, approaches to neoliberalism as ideology/ideological project. Whether understood as composed of beliefs, values or ideas, ideology works affectively. As Grossberg (2010: 194–5) stresses, ideological effects of naturalness and inevitability are produced through ‘the affective investments in particular significations that grants them the claim to represent the world’. Slightly differently, approaches to neoliberalism as ‘discourse’ track the relays between the ‘rules of formation’ for a discourse and how affective investments and attachments are organized (typically around processes of othering that work through negation). For an example of approaches that mix the ideological and discursive, consider work that explicates how

neoliberalism becomes ‘common-sense’. At the level of ideas, Hall and O’Shea (2013) stress, after Gramsci, that neoliberal common-sense is ‘incoherent’ (p. 4) or ‘contradictory’ (p. 3), made up of disjunctive elements. And yet, at the level of affect, common-sense ‘feels coherent’ (p. 2) and becomes intuitive. Whilst they recognize that ‘affective dimensions’ are ‘at play’ (p. 6) and ‘underpin’ (p. 6) common-sense, their emphasis is representational-referential – on how common-sense provides ‘frameworks of meaning with which to make sense of the world’ (p. 1).

Governmentality approaches grant a more specific role to affect, but collapse a concern with affect into a focus on processes of ‘subjectification’. Recent work has shown how specific ‘capacities to affect and be affected’ are invoked when attempting to produce the supposedly archetypal ‘neoliberal subject’. Work has highlighted how the obligation that the subject become ‘an entrepreneur of himself or herself’ (Ong, 2007: 14) is accompanied by the investment of hope in the market as the source of a good or better life and the weakening of hope in other collective solutions (see Mitchell, 2006; Langley, 2014; Sparke, 2006). This redirection of affective energies to the ‘freedom’ of the market happens alongside attempts to inculcate feelings and practices of individualized responsibility and self-care in the midst of a background of intensified insecurity (see Bondi, 2005; Walkerdine, 2005).

Other work has highlighted the specific affective capacities necessary to sustain the active, striving relation to the future supposedly necessary for (self)investment. Raco (2008), for example, stresses how mid-late 2000s welfare reform in the UK involved attempts to create ‘aspirational citizens’ marked by a hope in individualized social mobility. Recent work has developed this implicit complication of the equation between the neoliberal subject and the rational, calculative subject. Pedwell (2012: 283), for example, argues that, as part of a broader

move to governing through emotions, ‘empathy ... has become part and parcel of being a self-managing and self-enterprising individual in a neoliberal order’ (see also Isin [2004] on the ‘neurotic subject’ who acts on the basis of its anxieties and insecurities). Whilst this work reminds us that ‘neoliberal subjects’ do not equate to the rational subject, affect is typically treated as an object-target of processes of subjectification. By focusing on governmentalities, affect becomes a material to be manipulated or moulded to form subjects in conformity with neoliberal policies or programmes. Routing affect through a concern with subjectivity is not unique to governmental approaches, however. For example, Dean (2008), after Žižek (1989) on neoliberalism as an ideological formation that organizes enjoyment through the fantastic promise of free trade, argues that neoliberalism operates through new affective subject positions to be inhabited or othered (the ‘shopaholic’ or ‘incorrigible criminal’).

So affect is far from absent in existing cultural work on neoliberalism, but it is secondary to a concern with ideological or discursive mediation and/or collapsed into a focus on the formation of purportedly ‘neoliberal subjects’. I will come to some exceptions to this below, but this has two consequences in addition to presuming that ‘subjectification’ is how power operates (see Barnett, forthcoming). First, analysis focuses on (cognitive, semiotic) meaning, resulting in only a truncated range of affective expressions being attended to. Second, analysis focuses on one form of mediation – signifying-subjectifying processes – to the exclusion of other processes and conditions. What risks being omitted are the ways in which collective affects form part of the conditions through which economic-political formations come to form and are lived: how an atmosphere ‘envelopes’ or how a structure of feeling ‘pressures’ (see Anderson, 2014).

The relation between the ongoing organization of collective affects and the grip and tenacity of neoliberalism is intimated in some

diagnoses of neoliberalism's exclusionary mechanisms and damages. For example, Tyler (2013) shows how stigma is used to justify punitive state intervention over raced and classed peoples who are abandoned by, excluded from or otherwise cast out of the market. Likewise, Wacquant (2010) ties the ascent of restrictive workfare and expansive prisonfare to a complex translation of various senses of social and economic insecurity into forms of resentment. 'Punitive containment' resonates with a specific affective condition:

It taps the *diffuse social anxiety* coursing through the middle and lower regions of social space in reaction to the splintering of wage work and the resurgence of inequality, and converts it into *popular animus* towards welfare recipients and street criminals. (Wacquant, 2010: 204, emphasis added)

Wacquant also highlights how other collective affects – including 'simmering ethnic resentment' and 'popular resentment' (Wacquant 2010: 207, 217) – condition the new government of poverty. We can push this implicit recognition of the relation between affect and neoliberalism further by asking: How does neoliberal reason emerge from specific affects? And how do collective affects coexist – resonate, interfere, etc. – with the other conditions and processes that constitute actually existing neoliberalisms? Addressing these questions requires that we supplement analysis of how bodily 'capacities to affect and be affected' are shaped through processes of subjectification, without jettonising the vital insights of this work (that modes and technologies of power may work through affective subjects).

In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault (2008) offers a novel account of neoliberalism that opens up a way of understanding collective affects as dynamic conditions that neoliberalisms happen in and through. In the background to his diagnosis of liberalism/neoliberalism are a series of collective affects. For example,

Foucault (2008: 66/67) describes 'stimulation of the fear of danger' as the 'condition' of liberalism. Fear is the affective expression of the dangers that are 'perpetually being brought to life' (2008: 66) in the interplay between freedom and security. There is a hint here that collective affects operate in ways that may be related to but exceed discursive or ideological forms and processes. Explicating what is implicit in Foucault's lectures requires that we pause and attempt to articulate what, for him, marks the specificity of neoliberalism. Foucault locates the novelty of neoliberalism in a particular problematization of the relation between government and the market. Neoliberalism 'breaks' (Foucault, 2008: 119) with and effects 'transformations' (2008: 131) in a classical liberalism that, Foucault argues, was based on an operative principle of 'laissez-faire' and a conception of the market as a natural mechanism of exchange. Anticipating recent work on how neoliberalism institutes new state arrangements (Mirowski, 2013: 16; Dardot and Lavel, 2014; Peck and Tickell, 2002), Foucault argues that neoliberalism involves continuous intervention by the state at the level of the 'framework' or the 'rules of the games', with the aim and hope of creating 'the concrete and real space in which the formal structure of competition could function' (Foucault, 2008: 132).

What Foucault (2008: 132) describes as the 'permanent vigilance, activity, and intervention' of neoliberalism happens in order to extend and intensify the market. It is less an intervention into the market and more an intervention into previously non-economic domains to attempt to create the conditions for the market and, simultaneously, 'a general regulation of society by the market' (2008: 145). Neoliberalism is not, then, simply an intensified 'laissez-faire' based on what Harvey (2005: 20) calls 'free market principles of neo-classical economics' (even if rhetorically 'laissez-faire' may be evoked, particularly in the USA; Gamble,

2006). Rather, for Foucault (2008: 243), neoliberalism inverts the relation between the social and the economic through an ‘absolute’ or ‘unlimited’ generalization of a particular form of the market – competition between unequals (although Foucault distinguishes between German and American neoliberalisms on this point, the former having an ‘economic-ethical ambiguity’ [2008: 241] around competition). The market in the form of competition comes to act as (a) a generalizable grid of intelligibility and (b) a test that acts as the ground for a criticism of government. The novelty of neoliberalism across national differences consists, for Foucault, in making a particular form of the market – relations of competition as expressed in the enterprise form (2008: 241) – the ‘formative principle’ of the social and undertaking interventions to create the conditions for competition throughout life.

By specifying what makes neoliberalism new, Foucault avoids an ‘inflationary’ use of the term that makes it ubiquitous but elusive (Collier, 2011: 246). Unsurprisingly, given the provisionality of the lecture form and when he was speaking, Foucault’s emphasis on competition sits uneasily with the recent emphasis on the travels of neoliberalism and processes of geo-historical translation, expression and articulation (see, for example, Brenner et al., 2010; Collier, 2011). Indeed, it would be easy to incorporate Foucault into an account of a single, finished ‘logic’ extrapolated from a particular period in a US and European ‘centre’. However, this would be to underestimate the mutability and adaptability of logics and how any logic is an unfinished, open, set of tendencies and potentialities.¹ A logic cannot, then, simply be realized or made manifest. Instead, particular neoliberalisms emerge as logics are actualized in diverse forms of ‘neoliberal reason’ – by which I mean the problematization and reordering of government and/or life through the market (in the form of competition) via styles of thinking-feeling and diverse techniques of intervention (principally although

not exclusively through formal mechanisms of calculative choice).

As he demarcates what makes neoliberalism new, Foucault gestures towards how particular affects are part of this novel problematization of life/market. Partly, this is because the lectures hint that the extension of relations of competition reorders affective life and that competition itself may have something like a tone. The illustrations of American neoliberalism’s unlimited extension of a market-based ‘grid of intelligibility’ through ‘human capital’ are, for example, often affective relations normatively involving love–marriage (Foucault, 2008: 268) and mother–child relations (2008: 243–4). His distinction between German and American neoliberalisms turns on the former’s emphasis on the necessity of ‘warm’ compensatory mechanisms in comparison to the ‘coldness’ of competition. Unsurprisingly, though, the connection with affect that has been most explicitly taken up concerns Foucault’s emphasis on the centrality of *homo oeconomicus* as the ‘eminently governable’ subject of interests who ‘responds systematically to modifications in the variables of the environment’ (2008: 270).

There is, though, another usually neglected trace of affect in Foucault: that particular collective affects condition how neoliberalism emerges, circulates, and is transformed. His brief remarks on ‘state phobia’ – an ‘ambiguous’ anxiety or fear about the state (Foucault, 2008: 76) – point to how we might supplement a concern with discursive or ideological mediation. For state-phobia exists as something like a background condition for the formation and circulation of the extension of relations of competition. But it is irreducible to neoliberalism. Foucault emphasizes its polymorphous origins (2008: 78), in doing so reminding us that there may not be an exclusive relation, or tight homology, between a collective affect and a particular form or style of political reason (likewise with the ‘diffuse social anxiety’ Wacquant identifies).

As a distinctive pattern of pressures and limits, state-phobia is a mobile condition, crossing between forms of neoliberalism *and* the French and international left. Formulated and at one point localizable in the crisis of governmentality between 1930 and 1945, state-phobia came to have a ‘force of circulation’ (2008: 189). Speaking in 1979, Foucault stresses its many sources and agents: ‘the Soviet experience of the 1920s, the German experience of Nazism, English post-war planning, and so on’ (2008: 76).

We can think, then, of how resonances are created at the level of collective affects between disparate, even divergent, forms of political reason. As Hannah (2015: 2) argues, contemporary state-phobia is not only neoliberal. It also imbues: liberal-bourgeois concern with a ‘crisis of democracy’; concern from left and right with the surveillance state; and radical left-wing critique of the state as repressive. This introduces another way in which a logic/reason is and becomes different. Folded with and into neoliberal reason are collective affects – state-phobia being but one – that gather within them elements of other forms and styles of reasoning. Neoliberal relations with the state are multiple and ambivalent. Nevertheless, we might think of state-phobia as an affective condition in the sense that it is part of, and shapes, how neoliberalism counterpoises state to market. It is at once an affective expression of other conditions and an affective force itself that conditions, without determining, how the state is related to and felt. For Foucault, state-phobia is a ‘sign’ of a crisis of liberal governmentality that neoliberal reason responds to and that is also ‘manifested’ in a ‘number of re-evaluations, re-appraisals, and new projects in the art of government’ (Foucault, 2008: 69). State-phobia is also, at the same time, a mediating state effect/affect that conditions in two ways. First, the state is endowed with an ‘endogenous imperialism’ (2008: 187) in relation to civil society (positioned as ‘its other, its outside, its target, and its object’; 2008: 187). Second, and

linked to the emphasis on the evolutionary dynamism of the state, there is a ‘genetic continuity’ (2008: 187) between different forms of the state – with the result that what the actual state does is passed over in favour of a future-orientated ‘general disqualification by the worst’ (2008: 188) that enacts affectively ‘the great fantasy of the paranoiac and devouring state’ (2008: 189).

State-phobia is not singular. We could track different but partially connected raced and classed state-phobias across actualizations of neoliberalism (Baldwin, 2015). For example, consider contemporary UK right-wing state-phobia orientated to the supposed excesses of the welfare state in the context of the cuts, retractions and reforms of austerity. As Tyler shows, critiques of the excesses of the welfare state and the dependencies it supposedly engenders is inseparable from the stigmatization of ‘national objects’ (2013: 47) in classed and raced terms (see Hancock [2004] on the role of the affective image of the poor, black, female ‘welfare queen’ in intensifying the push to ‘roll back’ the welfare state in 1980s America). What is useful conceptually is the sense that neoliberal reason is actualized in the midst of collective affects that are irreducible to neoliberal reason. In two ways, this avoids collapsing affect into a secondary effect of discursive or ideological forms of mediation or the object-target of top-down processes of subjectification. First, it gestures towards the particular ways in which collective affects mediate, in that they shape how things are made present and come to have force and significance. Second, it helps us understand the affective present as a series of barely coherent, amorphous backgrounds that people adjust to, live with and dwell in. In the remainder of the paper I develop these starting points by offering two pragmatic-contextual translations of my initial definition of affect: ‘atmospheres’ and ‘structures of feeling’. Each translation is designed to draw attention to particular ways in which affects condition

neoliberal reason and particular actualizations of neoliberalism.

Let's turn, first, to some of the occasions through which neoliberal reason emerged. My emphasis will be on the atmospheres that imbued those occasions, where I use the term 'atmosphere' to disclose indeterminate affective impressions that emanate from and envelope particular enclosed arrangements. The two empirical occasions I focus on – the meetings of the Mont Pelerin Society and the workshop in the Chicago School of Economics – serve as examples for two reasons. First, my focus on a workshop and a meeting is intended to show the ordinariness of neoliberalism's affective life even in what have become paradigmatic organizations, that is, the way in which neoliberalisms emerge and are (re)made through innumerable, partially connected occasions that are at once generic (a 'meeting' or 'workshop') and singular. Second, I focus on the occasions because, as I will show, they were critical to the formation of what, after Plehwe (2009), we can call neoliberal thought-feeling collectives. Through the production of affinities at the level of feeling, both acted as occasions for the inculcation of shared styles of reasoning across transnational networks, organizations and people. Whilst my focus on the two examples is brief and intended in this paper to be illustrative, I retrospectively reconstruct something of now residual atmospheres by following their afterlives, including in biographies, reminiscences, and official accounts.²

III Neoliberal atmospheres

Founded by Friedrich von Hayek and first meeting in the Hotel du Pac near Mont Pélérin in April 1947, the initial meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society was attended by 39 economists, historians and philosophers, amongst others. Over 10 days the participants came together for a series of discussions, excursions and informal meals in the hope of fostering a 'new' or

'revised' liberalism (Burgin, 2012) – the affective background being what the Society's founding statement described as a 'crisis of our times' in which 'human dignity' and 'freedom' were threatened by 'the constant menace from the development of current tendencies in policy' (specifically the post-Second World War 'socialist' revival of forms of 'state intervention').³ As Plehwe (2009: 16) emphasizes, participants shared a sense of isolation and despair.

Recalling the first meeting of the Society, Milton Friedman praises a 'collegial atmosphere' where participants 'could discuss freely their differences, and try out new ideas, without having to watch out for someone waiting for a chance to skewer them' (Friedman and Friedman, 1998: 333). The 'spirit' of the meetings supposedly afforded 'spirited discussion of serious intellectual issues' (1998: 582). Accounts of the meeting highlight its 'convivial' atmosphere (Burgin, 2012). In the midst of post-war crisis and the fervent belief that a revival of liberalism was necessary and just about achievable, the atmospheres of the 'closed' meeting were one element in the formation of a transnational community of intellectual amity. Even if not named as such, perhaps its atmospheres live on in the warm tone with which the meeting (and the journey to the meeting) is later described by participants; in the photographs of the group that have become a public record of the meeting; in the position granted the meeting in the official record of the Society (Hartwell, 1995), amongst other traces. Always multiple and exceeding any one name, atmospheres change. Later meetings will be described by MPS member John Davenport as 'stormy' (quoted in Friedman and Friedman, 1998: 160). Reflecting on the expansion of the Society to over 250 people, and reminding us of changes in the generic form of the meetings, the *National Review* warned of a shift from an 'intimate atmosphere of a select group' to 'the business-like atmosphere of a professional convention' (Fertig, 1962: 311, cited in Burgin, 2012: 128).

The Mont Pelerin Society is one of a number of origins for neoliberalism, as long as we use the term ‘origin’ advisedly to refer to what Bennett (2010: 33) terms a ‘complex, mobile, and heteronomous joiner of forces’.⁴ As is now well known, neoliberal reason is mutable, as it is formulated, circulated and reworked through partially connected transnational networks of exchanges. We might think of the meeting as one forum where the ‘inflationary’ anti-state suspicion that Foucault (2008: 187) writes of intensifies and from which it circulates alongside a fierce belief in liberalism, even if neither originates there. The meetings are occasions for the reconstruction of liberalism, as part of what Peck (2010: 40) terms ‘an insistent search for intellectual amity at a distance’. And key to that reconstruction in the early meetings was a mode of speech and encounter – a ‘privatised, strategic, elite deliberation’ (2010: 49) as Peck describes it – that was consensual on the threat to liberalism but was not ‘harmonious’ (Stigler, 1988) on how the state should intervene in society to create a market order (see Hartwell, 1995). The style and tone of speech being one element, amongst others, in the (re)making of an intimate atmosphere that countered the ‘isolation’ and ‘despair’ members shared – other elements being the geographic remoteness and separation of the mountain setting, the closed nature of the meeting, and the hope that the crisis of liberalism could be ended.

My brief example of the Mont Pelerin Society was intended to introduce the first translation of affect: atmospheres that are part of the real conditions of emergence for neoliberal styles of reasoning and objects of neoliberal reason.⁵ Atmospheres that are part of and are (re)constituted through the activities that make up occasions, that may become something shared between participants, and may live on. Atmospheres are, in short, part of the birth and momentum of neoliberalisms. Nevertheless, they are tensed between the perceptible and imperceptible, the quasi-objective and the

quasi-subjective. Something of atmospheres live on and may be felt as they are recalled and named, so blurring lines between the past and present, but they are at the same time indeterminate, vague. Consider, for example, how the atmospheres of the first meeting fold into the Society’s founding statement. Whilst there is no necessary relation between a statement and the atmospheres constituted by acts that include the writing of the statement, the text holds together around a sense of hope for what the Society might accomplish in the midst of crisis: ‘Its object is solely, by facilitating the exchange of views among minds inspired by certain ideals and broad conceptions held in common to contribute to the preservation and improvement of the free society’.⁶ Perhaps it is a sense of inauguration, of hope against the ‘despair’ participants shared (Hartwell, 1995), that is relived and enacted when participants warmly recall the meeting or retrospectively grant the Society some degree of causal significance in what Friedman called a ‘victory in the war of ideas’ (Friedman and Friedman, 1998: 582).

Neoliberal reason is always, then, a thinking-feeling, not only a rationality. As well as having a tone, it emerges in the midst of the indeterminate atmospheres that imbue occasions. It is not only the atmospheres of occasions that are part of the real conditions of emergence for neoliberal reason. Networks, societies and other organizations may embody atmospheres (in part through the repetition of meetings and other singular-generic occasions) and function atmospherically. In their critical account of the emergence of the ‘think tank’ as site/scene for thinking, Baxstrom et al. (2005) argue that think-tanks have a ‘habitual mode of “thinking-feeling”’. Their examples are security related think-tanks, principally RAND, which produce concepts ‘linked to the affective mode of ever-present threat perception, panic and anxiety’. That is, any think-tank has an ‘affective tendency’ that imbues its practices and products of thinking. For example, the US

think-tanks that propagate belief in a variant of neoliberal reason – The Heritage Foundation or The American Enterprise Foundation, say – combine a sense of the threat the state poses to various precarious ‘freedoms’ with reassertions of a bellicose faith in growth as the predominant social policy (Connolly, 2008). We might speculate on how these and other organizations that develop neoliberal solutions prime the tones that become attached to and are carried by policies.

Whilst not the focus of this paper, I use the word ‘tone’ to refer to how any ‘neoliberal object’ (a policy, etc.) possesses an ‘affective bearing’: a ‘general disposition or orientation toward its audience and the world’ (Ngai, 2005: 28). Tone is sensed when a cluster of more or less vague affective impressions accompany a policy. For example, Wacquant (2010) stresses how a punitive penal policy is legitimized by reference to the affective image of the underclass as the cause of a widespread sense of insecurity. Perhaps the most pervasive, but little remarked upon, example of tone is how efforts to extend relations of competition are accompanied by and enabled by hopes in the market as the source of individual and public good. Consider, for example, the cluster of promises through which contemporary austerity measures are justified (Raynor, 2015). Retraction of the material resources of the state and of the social-democratic promise of the state has been, in part, justified through hope in the market as the best mechanism for the provision of previously public things.

Atmospheres are complex conditions that simultaneously imbue and undo distinctions between occasions, organizations, styles of thinking, and objects. Perhaps the atmospheres of occasions/organizations have an emergent causality that can be retrospectively traced in the tone of policies, ideas, and so on. However, atmospheres are not simply reproduced or expressed without differences. And they do not simply pre-exist the formation of organizations

or neoliberal objects/reason. Undoing distinctions between cause and effect, atmospheres emanate from and fold back into dynamic constellations of people, things and ideas. Consider the importance of the intensely combative workshop system in the constitution of the affective tendencies of the ‘second’ ‘Chicago School’. The workshop, initiated by Milton Friedman, became a key site for (re)producing an increasingly ‘assertive’ (Peck, 2010: 96) hyper-rationalist economic orthodoxy, or what, after Connolly (2008), we could call an ‘existential bellicosity’. The economist Gary Becker reminisces about the atmosphere that he found on arrival in Chicago:

When I came to Chicago as a graduate student in 1951 I was flabbergasted by how stimulating the atmosphere was. I’d been a very good student at Princeton, the first day in Friedman’s class he raised a question. I answered. He replied ‘that’s no answer, that’s just rephrasing the question’. That was the example of how blunt people were. (Becker, 2002)

Becker describes being affected (‘flabbergasted’) by a stimulating atmosphere – an atmosphere that is made, in part, by the blunt tone of a speech-act, but is also informed by the affective contrast with other partially connected sites (‘Princeton’). Here we get a sense of the complex relays and indistinctions between the atmospheres of a generic occasion (a ‘workshop’), of the ‘Chicago School’, and of styles of thinking. There is more to be said about each. We could stress, for example, the masculinism and geographic and political marginality of the ‘Chicago School’ that led Friedman to fondly reminisce about his time in an ‘exciting place’ that preserved an ‘atmosphere of the search for truth’ (Friedman and Friedman, 1998: 35).

Atmospheres are, then, part of the occasions/organizations through which neoliberal reason forms *and* what moves as neoliberalisms circulate. We might say that this makes neoliberalism into an atmospheric kind of thing. Atmospheres

extend beyond enclosed sites (the meeting or workshop) to constitute a ‘society’ or a ‘school’ as a transnational, mutable space of affective belonging and attachment (that may be enacted by acts of recalling/reliving atmospheres). For example, perhaps the Mont Pelerin Society and Chicago School connect at the level of affective tendencies, or what Connolly (2008) terms ‘affinities of sensibility’ which cross ideational differences and overlaps of personnel (Van Horn and Mirowski, 2009). Atmospheres also live on, in changed form, through dispositions, habits, memories and styles. Without using those terms, Peck (2010: 102) gestures towards the fluid topology of atmospheres when describing ‘Chicago types’:

While Chicago types remained a small minority, they were emboldened both by the strength of their convictions and by a sustaining belief that the collectivist-interventionist tide would eventually turn, the fervency of which has been likened to religious forms of devotion. (Peck, 2010: 102)

What animates ‘Chicago types’ is, in part, a ‘fervency’ and ‘belief’ in the market. ‘Belief in the market’, the ‘threat of collectivism’ or other atmospheres may be amplified as they are carried by networks of neoliberal reason. Those who encounter those networks may be assailed by neoliberal atmospheres, may happen across them, may be gently nudged by them, or may otherwise be affected.

The spatiality of neoliberal atmospheres is doubled, then. Atmospheres come and go in particular enclosures that they emanate from and temporarily envelope. But atmospheres or traces of atmospheres also live on, move and change form, becoming ‘capacities to affect and be affected’ such as a ‘sustaining belief’ or the feeling of being ‘emboldened’. For example, Mirowski (2013) stresses the ‘belligerence’ of the ‘neoliberal thought collective’ as hopes in market solutions persisted after the 2008 financial crisis. It was not only that solutions were ‘ready to hand’ through a well-established

network that simultaneously ‘sowed doubt’ and ‘promoted ignorance’, producing, Mirowski claims, an affective public sphere of confusion (2013: 83, 92). In addition, neoliberal ideas and policies retained a momentum and force. Mirowski touches on various occasions (including the 2009 meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society) in which hopes in market solutions to the crisis were reasserted. Of course, for many, hope in neoliberal solutions may be weak or fragile, may have fallen apart or been disappointed, or may have been barely or never present.

Atmospheres are critical to the ongoing constitution of neoliberalism in two ways that blur any divide between affective and non-affective conditions. First, as part of what occasions and organizations/networks actually are, atmospheres participate in the conditions of emergence for neoliberal reason/logic. Second, neoliberal organizations, policies and so on become present atmospherically and those atmospheres accompany the circulation of neoliberal objects. The atmospheres that animate occasions, organizations, policies, and so on are complexly related to a second translation of my initial definition of affect: ‘structures of feeling’ that condition how particular neoliberalisms become part of everyday life.

IV ‘Structures of feeling’ and the affective present

The concept of ‘structure of feeling’ allows some purchase on the vague, amorphous affective conditions that are nevertheless critical to the differential translation and expression of neoliberal reason in particular contexts. As such, it supplements recent work on ‘actually existing’ neoliberalism that has centred the question of how particular neoliberalisms are (re)made and analysed the multiplicity of forces that are part of how neoliberalisms form. First described by Williams (1961: 63) as the ‘felt sense of the quality of life’ in a defined period, ‘structures of feeling ... exert palpable

pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action' (Williams, 1977: 132). Structures of feeling and atmospheres orientate inquiry to different *forms* of affective life. Atmospheres are ephemeral affective impressions that envelope particular enclosed forms (in the above examples an occasion, a network, and then particular bodies). Structures of feeling return us to the idea of dispersed moods discussed in Section II. A structure of feeling is best thought of as a set of distributed 'forming and formative processes' (1977: 128) constitutive of a 'specific present' (1977: 129). What is forming is a 'particular quality' of experience that gives a 'sense' of what Williams (1977: 131) describes as a 'generation or a period'. The 'particular quality' and 'sense' constitute an experience of the present that both extends beyond particular sites/occasions *and* is shared across otherwise separate sites/occasions. Let's illustrate this formal distinction by returning to the Mont Pelerin Society. The 'collegiate atmosphere' that enveloped the initial meeting is not equivalent to, but happens in the midst of, a more durable, distributed 'sense' of post-war 'crisis'.

My examples here are some of the moods that pressed and limited 1970s British 'Thatcherism'. Understood as distributed affective qualities that bestow an 'enigmatic coherence' (Pfau, 2005) across differences, the structures of feeling I describe do not add up to a totality that could exhaust what can be said of 1970s Britain or any other affective present. Their coherence is, at best, a disjunctive synthesis that folds with and into the particular actualization of neoliberalism to which Stuart Hall (1988) gave the name 'Thatcherism'. What this means, though, is that particular neoliberalisms will be actualized in relation to and through structures of feeling that are always-already more than neoliberal. The 'structures of feeling' that are part of neoliberalisms other than Thatcherism – say the mix with evangelical Christianity in the USA (Connolly, 2008) or 'neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics' (Harvey, 2005) – will likely vary. Or, put

differently, there is not and cannot be a single typically 'neoliberal' structure of feeling. Instead, the task for analysis is to sense and grasp the effects of the always particular tangle of structures of feeling at play as part of specific circumstances or contexts. Because structures of feeling are particularizing, I stay longer with the example of Thatcherism by way of Stuart Hall's work in order to hold onto how structures of feeling are 'in solution' (Williams, 1977: 133) *and* 'formalised, classified, and ... built into institutions and formations' (1977: 133).⁷

In an essay first published in 1979 that launched the word 'Thatcherism' into political vocabulary, Hall (1988: 40) tracks a shift in 'popular mood': a 'swing to the right' that expressed a retraction of the post-war social-democratic promise in the midst of a translation of neoliberal logic/reason into a political project. Together with colleagues (Hall et al., 1988), he describes in affective terms the cluster of crises in which a variant of neoliberalism took hold. They touch on the 'virulence' of the reappearance of the 'red scare' in relation to the miners and other 'enemies within' (1988: 20). They describe the middle classes as 'in a state of irritable, Thatcher-like arousal' (1988: 22). At the same time, 'the crisis' comes to be organized around a 'collective conspiratorial paranoia' (1988: 26) that 'the British way of life' was threatened from within. In this climate of something like emergency, an 'exceptional state' flourishes, buoyed by an 'authoritarian mood' (1988: 27).

Whilst this was not their intention, Hall et al. remind us that the 'affective present' consists of multiple, co-existing, structures of feeling that enter into loose relation, rather than tight homology, with actualizations of neoliberal logic. Consider how Berlant (2011) senses a quieter scene of 'crisis ordinariness' in the contemporary USA. In the midst of the slow fraying and fading of the US post-war good life fantasy, ordinary living in the present involves a continual drama of adjustment to a world that no

longer provides the ground for fantasies that people, nevertheless, cling to. Optimism, even if often cruel, makes life liveable amid scenes of neoliberal restructuring that Berlant (2011: 11) claims ‘create manifest crisis situations in ordinary existence for more kinds of people’. Compare with Fisher (2009) on ‘capitalist realism’: a sense of capitalism’s inevitability amid the loss of other sources of hope that accompanies some actualizations of neoliberalism. A ‘pragmatic adjustment’ to neoliberalism (Fisher and Gilbert, 2013: 90), capitalist realism involves resignation, fatalism, acquiescence and apathy.

These examples remind us that structures of feeling *are* the resonances that create a dispersed but shared ‘affective present’ felt across diverse phenomena (an ‘affective present’ that is multiple and will be differentially related to and lived). So Fisher (2009), for example, diagnoses how a ‘sense of inevitability’ infuses multiple spaces of neoliberal restructuring and, at the same time, connects those spaces. As well as existing as resonances, structures of feeling intensify around scenes/objects/figures through which people are pulled into the orbit of neoliberal reason. For example, the figure of the ‘welfare queen’ that I discussed earlier folds welfare policy into racist structures of feeling that associate threat with blackness, single mothers and ‘the ghetto’. Another example would be the presence of the ‘sense of inevitability’ that Fisher diagnoses. The ‘sense’ is present through the absence of the imagination of alternatives and is (re)enacted in resigned or fatalistic claims that, whether desirable or not, capitalism is the only *realistic* system for the organization of today’s economy. It intensifies when alternatives are ignored, denounced, mocked, demonized and otherwise discredited through the charge of being ‘unrealistic’ or ‘utopian’. Consider, for example, the figures of the ‘extreme left’ in post-Thatcher UK politics who are discredited through the charge that they have failed to adjust to reality. In this process, structures of

feeling may be present atmospherically – through affective impressions that envelope political movements and figures.

Much more is implicated in this process of dispersion/intensification than the formation of ‘neoliberal subjects’. So, as well as the cluster of structures of feeling named above, the particular actualization that is ‘Thatcherism’ was inseparable from the intensifications of a kind of ‘anxiety’ that temporarily attached to various ‘othered’ objects/figures/scenes before moving to new ones. Take race:

The fears about race are not explicated by a succession of panics about blacks, or catharsized by Powellite rhetoric, or calmed by tougher and tougher measures of control on the entry of immigrants. Up they rise again, now about ‘the ghetto’, or about black schools, or about the black unemployed, or about black crime. (Hall et al., 1988: 36)

Emergent from the overlap and convergence of specific ‘moral panics’, was the sense of a ‘multi-faceted and one’ (Hall et al., 1988: 36) ‘enemy’ present everywhere that was the counterpoint to a white, classed, ‘British people’ that Thatcherism attempted to redistribute hopes of social mobility to. This doubled structure of feeling – attachment of anxieties and resonance of multiple anxieties into ‘one’ threat to the ‘British people’ – provided one affective condition for Thatcherism’s authoritarian ‘law-and-order’ state effects/affects.

Hall et al. provide us with a sense of interlocking crises lived through multiple, overlapping, structures of feeling that condition, without determining, the actualization of neoliberalism in the formation of ‘Thatcherism’ (a formation that was more than neoliberal). There is a twofold spatiality at play. On the one hand, structures of feeling are (re)enacted through and intensify in particular scenes/objects/figures (‘schools’, ‘the ghetto’, etc.). On the other hand, they happen as diffuse affective qualities that create resonances across otherwise separate

spaces (the presence of the ‘enemy’). Through intensifications and resonances, they condition without determining how things can be attuned to and come to be present and felt. Consider Thatcherism’s doubled relation with the state – one that was slightly different to the strategic use of and disavowal of the state typically associated with neoliberalism. If one state affect/effect is the authoritarian ‘law-and-order’ state, the other involved an intense critique of the state. In his essay on the shift to the right, Hall (1988) diagnosed an ‘anti-state’ mood that was one way in which a disintegration of the post-war social-democratic consensus was felt. Its basis was in a critique of the social democratic corporatist state that involved a particular iteration of ‘state-phobia’ refracted through the then conjuncture of crisis and intensified by experiences of numbing bureaucracy: a state that Hall (1988: 50) claims was massively present in everyday life *and* used to ‘discipline, limit, and police the very classes it claimed to represent’. He roots the gradual attachment to ‘anti-statism’ around a claim of how such a state had become felt in ordinary spaces of everyday life, what we could term the ‘state affects’ (Woodward, 2014) of the corporatist state in and as part of crisis:

Whether in the growing dole queues or in the waiting-rooms of an over-burdened National Health Service, or suffering the indignities of Social Security, the corporatist state is increasingly experienced by them [‘working people’] not as a benefice but as a powerful bureaucratic imposition on ‘the people’. (Hall, 1988: 51)

Hall claims the state of social-democratic corporatism was no longer felt as ‘neutral-benevolent’, even if it was only ever felt as such for some. It was instead felt as imposition, present through the alienating affects of bureaucracy. As with Foucault’s (2008) comments on how state-phobia involves a ‘disqualification by the worst’, the Thatcherite critique works by rendering the ‘state bureaucracy and collectivism’ of the social-democratic corporatist state

equivalent to ‘socialism’ and the ‘spectre’ (Hall, 1988: 51) of actually existing Eastern European socialism. Instead of working around the anticipatory hyper-vigilance that Foucault (2008) argues marks diagnoses of ‘state-phobia’, signs and symptoms of crisis are retrospectively attached to ‘the state’. ‘The state’ becomes the cause of a sense of turbulence. Hall claims that it is felt and disclosed as the enemy of a raced and classed ‘British people’. The actualization of neoliberalism that Hall names ‘Thatcherism’ is conditioned, then, by structures of feeling that mark a point of transition from the social-democratic state, as well as resonating with other emergent structures of feeling in a ‘shift’ rightward. Hage (2003), for example, argues that Thatcherism attached the weak hope of individualized/familial social mobility to housing market participation in the context of the aforementioned loss of hope in social-democratic collective structures.

My encounter with and rereading of Hall and colleagues’ work offers only one account of a now residual affective present. In itself, it is not sufficient as a diagnosis of the affective geographies of Thatcherism (nor of how Thatcherism lives on affectively in contemporary austerity politics). Nevertheless, it exemplifies one way of discerning the jumble of structures of feeling that condition how neoliberalism actualizes in nameable (‘Thatcherism’) political formations. Structures of feeling are part of the ‘tangle’ (Collier, 2012: 189) of things – (trans)local political conditions, transformations of the global economy, and so on – that neoliberal logic/reason happens in the midst of and becomes differently with. In how they exist as resonances between contexts, perhaps structures of feeling are part of the ‘contexts of contexts’ for neoliberalisms, albeit in a quite different way to how the singular phrase ‘context of context’ is normally used (see Brenner et al., 2010). At the same time as they condition, neoliberalisms might exist as structures of feeling: dispersed qualities such as a ‘sense of inevitability’ or

an ‘anxiety about the state’ that become part of policies, programmes and projects that extend the market. If so, this gives us cause to reconsider what is meant by the phrase ‘actually existing’ in calls to attend to ‘actually existing’ neoliberal regimes or neoliberal states. Neoliberalism might ‘actually exist’ as a dispersed particular quality or sense. As much as it was a set of reforms and a political project, Thatcherism ‘actually existed’ in how the authoritarian state and the market were felt, for some, as sources of hope. And yet, structures of feeling are irreducible to neoliberalism. They always fold in and express at least a trace of other spaces and times. ‘Neoliberal’ structures of feeling are composed through multiple elements, including affective qualities that were/are part of formations that cannot be solely identified with neoliberalism (in Thatcherism’s case those associated with nationalist belonging, amongst others).

V Concluding comments: Neoliberal affects?

What I’ve offered in this paper is a vocabulary for understanding how different kinds of collective affects are part of the real conditions for the formation of neoliberal logic/reason and for the actualization of particular neoliberalisms. I have also tried to understand ‘actually existing’ neoliberalism as, in part, composed of ephemeral atmospheres and dispersed structures of feeling. Perhaps vague, possibly amorphous, such affects do not add up to a single dominant mood. My aim has been to avoid reproducing a totalizing account of the affective present by holding onto the multiplicity and ambivalences of affective life. There are, of course, a series of other geographies that would further complexify my account of neoliberal life, not least the political affects of indignation, rage or hope that animate and fold into oppositional movements in neoliberalism’s ‘socio-spatial frontiers’ (Peck, 2010: 6). Nor in this paper have I homed

in on affective damages and how they may shift what a body can do, i.e. a body’s capacities to affect and be affected. For an example of work that stays with how neoliberalism harms, consider Povinelli’s (2011) description of the ‘social projects’ through which people make affective ‘conditions of endurance’ amid disrupted, fractured lives.

My analysis has aimed to supplement, rather than replace, existing cultural approaches to understanding the constitution of neoliberalism, whilst recognizing that most approaches to neoliberalism make implicit claims about affective life. Existing cultural approaches collapse a concern with affect into the question of the formation of ‘neoliberal subjects’ through signifying processes and/or governmental techniques/technologies. Questions of affect are not simply ignored – ideology critique presumes that dominant ideas are lived affectively, for example, whilst governmentality approaches assume that subjectification involves the moulding of affective dispositions – but they reduce questions of the organization of affect to one form/process of mediation. In this context, I have tried to do two things that both expand from the claim that neoliberalisms are mediated affectively. First, I have argued that particular atmospheres are part of the real conditions of formation for neoliberal reason/objects and, as such, are central to understanding the momentum of policies, programmes and so on. Second, I have emphasized that neoliberalisms happen as/in the midst of dynamic structures of feeling that are more than neoliberal, and become part of the processes whereby the unfinished logic of neoliberalism is differentially actualized. This means that claims about ‘neoliberal affects’ are always claims about a particular geo-historical conjuncture, the constitution and limits of which are empirical questions. Consequently, discerning a ‘collegial atmosphere’ or an ‘authoritarian mood’, as I have done in this paper, may tell us nothing about the ‘neoliberal affects’ of other conjunctures.

This leads to some questions for future research that attempts to understand how and with what consequences neoliberalism as a singular but always unfinished logic is differentially actualized in geo-historically specific circumstances. The first set of questions concern the manner in which neoliberal reason emerges and circulates: How do atmospheres envelop the sites and networks through which neoliberal reason is formed and moves? How do atmospheres attach to particular policies and programmes, that is, how are atmospheres assembled and achieved? And how does the tone of reason have effects, or what do the cluster of promises and threats, hopes and fears, that surround and infuse particular solutions do? The next set of questions concern how neoliberal logic/reason is actualized through structures of feeling: How do structures of feeling press and limit scenes of neoliberal restructuring? How and who do structures of feeling harm or damage? And how are structures of feeling differentially lived, that is, adjusted to, acquiesced to, or disrupted? Finally, and extending beyond my emphasis on neoliberal reason in this paper, we might ask how neoliberalism is lived with/in if people's attachments and investments in neoliberal objects lack the surety of enthusiastic endorsement or angry rejection. What atmospheres affect as violence? How is the atmosphere of a policy encountered as promises are reattached to solutions that have brought loss? How did Friedman's 'climate of opinion' or Hall's 'more hospitable climate' weigh too heavily on some peoples and how might some 'climates' fade or end? These questions anticipate future research that both understands specific affects as conditions for neoliberalisms *and* treats 'actually existing' neoliberalisms as affective.

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Notes

1. As used here, 'logic' is close to Deleuze's (1988: 36) version of the term 'diagram': 'a non-unifying immanent cause that is co-extensive with the whole social field'. There are parallels here with uses of the precursors 'mode' (see Peck [2010: xiii] on 'mode of governance') and 'logic' (see Ong [2007] on 'logic of governing') in work that presumes neoliberalism as a mutable and adaptive process/form.
2. The brief examples in this paper are from a wider project that encounters statements, (auto)biographies, official histories and secondary literature on neoliberalism for traces of affect. This involves a speculative attempt to reconstruct collective affects that are both of the past and residual elements in the present by reading for explicit expression (when an atmosphere or mood is named and described), reading awry for the presence of affect in tone, and reading against the grain to draw out traces of affect (as in my engagement with Stuart Hall).
3. Extract from Founding Statement of Aims: Mont Pelerin Society, Switzerland, 8 April 1947.
4. There are multiple other pre- and post-Second World War 'birthplaces' for neoliberal reason, including Vienna and London and the 1920s–30s writings of Mises and Hayak (Gane, 2014) and post-war German ordoliberalism (Foucault, 2008).
5. I use the neutral and generic designator 'object of neoliberal reason' to name the effects of neoliberal reasoning, including policies, proto-policies, regulatory experiments, texts and ideas.

6. Extract from Founding Statement of Aims: Mont Pelerin Society, Switzerland, 8 April 1947.
7. This section reads Hall's work against the grain for affect, whilst attempting to follow his emphasis on understanding contexts and conjunctures (and as such supplementing existing work on the politics of affect). As is typical of work influenced by ideology critique and Gramsci, something like affect is present but in the background throughout Hall's work (including through the phrase 'popular mood'). Given his attempt to understand the ambiguities of the popular, affect is not simply an occasion for the bodily inculcation of dominant ideas (and thus the affective accompaniment of 'false consciousness'). Nevertheless, affect is typically collapsed into a concern with signifying forms of mediation 'in and through the categories, classifications and frameworks of the culture' (Hall, 1980: 6). For example, when reflecting on the two versions of culture operative in cultural studies ('culturalist' and 'structuralist'), he is critical of what he argues is Williams' culturalist equation between culture and 'indissoluble real material practice-in-general' (Hall, 1980: 63). Despite this, I learn from Hall's attention to the ambiguities, over-determinations and complexities of any formation.

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