Symposium introduction: Global Crisis and the Need for Paradigm Change

This symposium consists of a selection of papers presented at the XI International Colloquium held at the Rio Branco Institute of Itamaraty (the Brazilian Foreign Ministry) on 6–7 May 2014 in Brasilia, Brazil. The colloquium was titled ‘Global Crisis and the Need for Paradigm Change’, which is the theme of the symposium.¹

The colloquium was sponsored by the University of Brasilia, the World Academy of Arts and Sciences (WAAS), the Rio Branco Institute of Itamaraty, the Celso Furtado International Center, and the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPQ). It was organized by Professor Joanilio Teixeira of the University of Brazil.

Paradigms play a critical role in social life, in social science, in social and economic policy, in law, and in politics. That is because they shape and guide the way we think. The motivation for the colloquium was a belief that there is a need for a new paradigm to shape new thinking so that humanity can escape the multiple crises that now afflict global civil society. These crises include a jobs crisis, an environmental crisis, a demographic crisis, a political accountability and participation crisis, and a crisis of governance that has seen a loss of public faith in government at a time when government is vitally needed to address our multiple crises.

The call for paradigm change poses a paradox. Thinking guides what we do, but we know we need new thinking. That speaks to a special role for critical thinking at this time. It also speaks directly to the purpose of the *Review of Keynesian Economics*, as reflected in the co-editors’ founding statement of purpose:

The economic crisis that these events have generated, combined with the failure of the mainstream economics profession, has again put the question of change on the table ... This intellectual failure has prompted us to launch the *Review of Keynesian Economics*. (ROKE, Inaugural issue, Autumn 2012, p. 1)

All the colloquium participants were very cognizant of the scale of the intellectual and political task. The existing system, including the system for producing knowledge claims, serves elite interests. Those interests are powerful and resistant to change of both the system and how we think. Furthermore, change can also harm working people who may suffer because of transition costs.

The challenge is to develop a new paradigm and new ideas that address humanity’s multiple crises. This must be paired with political and policy strategies that overcome the opposition of elites and calm the fears of ordinary people regarding change.

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1. The symposium also includes a paper by Filho and Fonseca which was not presented at the colloquium, but addresses the question of a new paradigm for development.