

Capitalizing Power: The Qualities and Quantities of Accumulation

A Conference of the Forum on Capital as Power

September 28-30, 2012, York University, Toronto

Call for Papers

Abstract Submission Deadline: Extended to July 21, 2012

Keynote and Faculty Guest Speakers

Professor Jeffrey Harrod, University of Amsterdam

Global Weimarism: The Demise of Cohesive Global Power?

Professor Herman Schwartz, University of Virginia

Intellectual Property Rights, Collective Action, and the Continuing Power of "Finance"

Professor Justin Podur, York University

Nature, Capital and Commodification: Ecology and the Capital as Power Framework

Professor J.J. McMurtry, York University

Community Capital: The Pitfalls and Promise of Local Power

Professor Jonathan Nitzan, York University

No Way Out: Crime, Punishment and the Limits of Power

With the global crisis lingering, many now wonder how capital has become so powerful, and what should be done about it. Although we are eager to provide answers, the problem starts with the question itself: what exactly do we mean by 'capital', and what does it mean to say that capital is 'powerful'? The difficulty lies in the fractured nature of modern social science – both its conventional division into numerous disciplines, including economics, politics, sociology, international relations, and culture, and the habitual bifurcation of the economy itself into real and nominal spheres. These fractures create conceptual rifts: they place most aspects of power outside the economic process, and they portray capitalization as a fictitious mirror of an economic reality located in production.

The theory of Capital as Power removes these fissures by abolishing the disciplinary divisions between economics, politics, and other disciplines, as well as the economic bifurcation of the real and nominal. In doing so, the theory puts power at the centre of analysis and examines finance as the main algorithm of capitalist power. The goal is to decipher the conversion of qualities to quantities: to theorize and research how the qualities of power – the multifaceted interactions of command and obedience, force and submission, violence and resistance – are universalized and discounted to the quantities of capitalization.

We are calling for theoretical, empirical, and historical papers to engage critically with questions such as the following. How does power bear on accumulation, and how does it get capitalized? How has capitalization evolved and mutated? What are the qualitative forms of power in capitalism, and how do they compare to those that characterized earlier modes of power? What are the historical roots of capital as power? Do these roots alter the way we understand the origins of capitalism? How does capitalism convert qualities into quantities? What are the limits of capitalized power? How is

capitalized power resisted and opposed? Can it be reformed or overthrown? Can these questions be addressed by mainstream and heterodox theories of capitalism – and if so, how do their answers differ from those offered by the theory of capital as power?

We are also interested in concrete areas of inquiry related to these broader questions. Suggested topics include:

- Capitalist power and labour – from proletarianization and wages to productivity and organization;
- International and regional relations and the capitalization of power;
- Capitalist and democratic accounting, including the history of discounting and its possible alternatives;
- Power and price formation – from local to global markets;
- The state as a locus of capitalization – from taxes and the law to ideology and violence;
- The role of capitalist power in contemporary crises;
- Capitalized power and nature – from genetic engineering, to energy, to the biosphere;
- Comparative modes of power: ancient and feudal, communist and fascist, capitalist and beyond;
- Capital as Power versus ‘primitive accumulation’ – dispossession, co-optation and genocide;
- The power dimensions of ‘immaterial’ capitalism – from leisure and fear to knowledge and ideology;
- The psychology of capitalist power;
- Alternative visions for a de-capitalized society.

The conference will comprise two parts: public presentations open to all (day one), followed by a closed workshop for the conference participants (days two and three). The workshop will consist of longer presentations, allowing more time for debate, discussion and contemplation. Participants should be prepared to present in either part, depending on the allocation made by the organizers.

Financial assistance: We may be able to assist presenters by partly covering the cost of travel and accommodation. This possibility is still tentative; it is conditional on our ability to secure sufficient funding.

Deadline: Please email abstracts of 250 words to: casp.york@gmail.com. The extended deadline for abstract submissions is **July 21, 2012**.