

Capital as Power

Broadening the Vista

A Conference of the Forum on Capital as Power
October 1-3, 2015
Carleton University, Ottawa

Call for Papers

Abstract Submission Deadline: March 20, 2015

CONTEXT

The theory of capital as power (CasP) offers a radical alternative to mainstream and Marxist theories of capitalism. It argues that capital symbolizes and quantifies not utility or labour but organized power writ large, and that capitalism is best understood and challenged not as a mode of consumption and production, but as a mode of power.

Growing interest in CasP, especially from young researchers, has contributed to a widening body of works dealing with different countries, regions, sectors, processes, methodologies and debates:

1. *Countries and regions*: The United States, Canada, Israel, Egypt, Pakistan, the Middle East, South Africa, South Korea.
2. *Sectors*: commodities, food and biofuel, petroleum, diamonds, armament, high-technology, pharmaceuticals, retailing, the art market, Hollywood, freelance creative work.
3. *Processes*: the emergence of the capitalist mode of power, ruling-class formation, protest and resistance, finance as operational symbolism, the rise and demise of distributional coalitions, the changing ownership of the public debt, conspicuous consumption, speculation, crime and punishment, differential taxation, Middle East energy conflicts, mergers and acquisitions, the globalization of ownership, political regime shifts, inflation and stagflation, systemic fear and systemic crises, the asymptotes of power, the link between social hierarchies and energy use, histories of sabotage, the resurgence of the Top 1%.
4. *Methodologies*: disaggregate accounting, measures of redistribution and power, stagflation indices, energy use as an alternative to 'real' GDP, differential yardsticks for activists, the capitalist 'conversion' of quality to quantity.
5. *Debates*: the capital/state dichotomy, real vs. nominal, imperialism and financialism, the transition from feudalism to capitalism, ethical investing, the impact of trade policies, the limits of macroeconomic policy.

Most of these works, along with interviews, reviews, course material, conference proceedings and lecture videos, are available from three Creative Commons websites: *Capital as Power*, *Review of Capital as Power (RECASP)* and *The Bichler and Nitzan Archives*. Readers and writers are invited to engage with, contribute to and debate on the CasP [Forum](#) and [Blog](#).

THE CONFERENCE

Over the past decade, the Forum on Capital as Power has organized many lectures, speaker series and conferences. Our most recent international gatherings include [Capitalizing Power: The Qualities and Quantities of Accumulation](#) (2012), [The Capitalist Mode of Power: Past, Present and Future](#) (2011), and [Crisis of Capital, Crisis of Theory](#) (2010).

The 2015 conference seeks to broaden the vista. We are looking for papers that extend and deepen CasP research, compare CasP with other approaches and critique CasP's methods and findings. Articles could be general or specific, theoretical or empirical, analytical or historical. Below we list some suggestions, though other topics would be equally welcome.

1. *Expanding and deepening CasP research.* Areas of interest include: (i) the concept of power in science and society: its evolution from antiquity to the present; (ii) the origins and spread of the capitalist mode of power: from feudal Europe to the world; (iii) from 'state and capital' to the 'state of capital': CasP perspectives on state theory and international relations; (iv) the emergence and spread of finance as the key architecture of the capitalist *creorder*; (v) the role of labour, production and waste in the capitalist mode of power; (vi) capitalist power and the environment: from planetary ecology, to energy, to the genome; (vii) capitalizing the social fabric: culture, religion, ethnicity, race, gender, literature and the academy; (viii) micro-CasP: the everyday manifestations of capital as power; (ix) the asymptotes of capitalist power: what are the limits of accumulation and how approaching those limits might undermine or transform capitalism; (x) from capitalist accounting to democratic *creordering*: creating a new language for an autonomous society.
2. *CasP vs. other approaches.* Mainstream economics and heterodox political economy conceive of capital as an 'economic' entity and therefore tend to treat power as affecting accumulation from the 'outside'. According to CasP, though, power is internal to accumulation: it defines what constitutes capital in the first place and determines how quickly it grows. How important is this conceptual difference? Does it lead to alternative questions and yield different answers? To what extent does the logic of capital absorb, subsume and internalize other forms of power such as patriarchy, race, bureaucracy and international relations? Can CasP offer new insights into these forms of power?
3. *Critiques of CasP.* What are the key shortcomings of CasP? Do these shortcomings reflect the birth pangs of a new approach, or are they inherent in its very logic? What areas of CasP need to be strengthened and developed? Where has CasP research gone astray? Are there aspects of capitalism that CasP might be conceptually unable to deal with?

PARTICIPANTS

The conference is open to everyone, with submissions vetted entirely on merit. We accept applications from established and new researchers, in and outside academia. However, we are particularly interested in submissions from *young* researchers of all ages, including MA and PhD students, private and public employees and free spirits. If you have an interest in the subject and something important – or potentially important – to say, please apply.

RECASP SPECIAL ISSUE / ESSAY PRIZE

Selected conference papers will be chosen for a special issue of the *Review of Capital as Power* (RECASP). Presenters who do not yet have a PhD are encouraged to submit their paper for the [RECASP Essay Prize Competition](#); deadline: December 31, 2015).

ORGANIZERS AND SPONSORS

The conference is organized by Randall Germain (Carleton) and Jonathan Nitzan (York) and is sponsored by the *Forum of Capital as Power* and the *Review of Capital as Power* (RECASP).

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 ability to secure sufficient funding.

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Please email abstracts of 250 words, along with personal details and institutional affiliation (if any) to Jonathan Nitzan (nitzan@yorku.ca). The deadline for abstract submissions is March 20, 2015.