NAVIGATING FINANCE & THE IMAGINATION

A collaborative theoretical walking tour of the City of London in the spirit of Cornelius Castoriadis

14 APRIL 2018

Application deadline:
February 28, 2018

OVERVIEW

On April 14, we invite an temporary interdisciplinary assembly of researchers, activists, artists and other interested parties to join us as we explore the imagined, imaginary and imaginative dynamics of financialization together through a collaboratively-constructed walking-tour of the City of London, to be followed by a semi-structured (indoor) conversation at University College London.

We are seeking participants to propose 15-minute experimental presentations to take place at particular sites in or near the City of London, a historically and symbolically rich hub of the global financial apparatus. Presentations could focus on particular architectures or spaces, or simply use them as jumping-off points for broader reflections.

Our orientation is towards discovering how the power of the imagination haunts and is haunted by financialized structures, spaces and legacies, including the ways these are intersected by class, race, empire, gender and other modes of oppression. We also seek to further cultivate the gifts for imagining rich post-capitalist, anti-colonial and queer futures that might come after financialization.

THE CITY OF LONDON

This 3km² locale in the heart of the metropole encompasses London’s historic stock exchange, the Bank of England, the headquarters of some of the world’s dominant financial firms (with their telling legacies of colonialism and violence) and many major landmarks and cultural institutions of a financialized city. We envision such a tour as an inspiring way to map the complexities and entanglements of financialization as an economic, political, social and cultural phenomenon.

THE IMAGINATION

Our tour is oriented by the thought of the late Cornelius Castoriadis, a thinker whose groundbreaking work on the radical possibilities of the social imagination has inspired numerous political activists and anti-authoritarian movements around the world. Castoriadis’ theorizing of imagination as a generative force in society and in political economy laid the foundation for one of the most innovative critiques of capitalism, religion and bureaucracy, one that incorporated, contested and extended beyond Marxist, Freudian and Weberian traditions. This event especially invites contributions that explore the relevance of Castoriadis’ original thinking to today’s dominant imaginaries of finance capitalism.

rival.lakeheadu.ca/londontour
THEMES

The organizers of this gathering encourage scholars, activists, artists and others interested in these questions to propose a contribution to a collectively-created walking tour of the City of London and its environs. Historical, contemporary or speculative themes might include:

• the social imagination of finance
• speculation, value and representations of the future
• resistance to finance and financialization
• financial spectacles and counter-spectacles
• colonialism, race, empire and financial speculation
• media and mediations of finance
• religion and/or finance
• financialisation and social reproduction
• financial fictions and neo-nationalist myths
• architectures and structures of financialization

FORMAT

Each selected participant will present a 15 minute informal lecture on a particular building, landmark, urban space or other geographic marker related to the core themes above. Potential contributors are welcome to apply without a specific locale in mind. The organizers will orchestrate all these mini-lectures into a walking tour that will transpire across the morning of the gathering, to be followed by a sustained, facilitated indoor discussion at University College London in the afternoon. (Technology will be provided to ensure all participants can hear and be heard during the tour). Our desire is to create a collaborative, convivial atmosphere for critical questioning and study.

OUTCOMES

Tour: With the participants’ permission, lectures presented will be recorded and later assembled into a downloadable audio- and virtual-tour, to be made accessible free and online.

Blog: Participants are invited to submit their lectures in text form to the Imaginal Politics stream of Public Seminar, the research blog associated with the New School for Social Research in New York.

Publish: Participants will be invited to develop their lectures into scholarly articles for potential inclusion in an special issue or book to be edited by the organizers.

APPLICATIONS and BURSARIES (due Feb 28):

If you are interested in participating, either as a presenter or an attendee, please apply by completing this form by February 28, 2018. Notices of acceptance will be issued by early March. Due to resource constraints, unfortunately not all applications can be accepted. Prospective contributors are encouraged to engage with some aspect of the work of Cornelius Castoriadis.

There are no costs for participants in this event. In addition, modest bursaries of up to £100 are available to assist graduate students, precariously employed faculty and non-academic participants with transportation, lodging, childcare and other costs. Please apply via the application form above.

Those of backgrounds that--by virtue of race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality or other targets of oppression--have been traditionally excluded from spaces of academic inquiry are especially encouraged to apply.

ORGANIZERS

Dr. Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou, Assistant Professor in Social Theory, University College London (a.komporozos@ucl.ac.uk)

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