

Post-politics, The Common and Alternative Futures

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Papers

(1) Mekonnen Tesfahuney & Katarina Schough – *Post-polis*

(2) Karin Bradley *The Post-political City, Justice & The Environment*

(3) Magnus Dahlstedt & Mekonnen Tesfahuney *The Speculative State & The Commons*

Other participants that address the theme of post-politics are most welcome.

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We live in a post-political age, in times when the *polis*, i.e., city and/or state, no longer comprise the self-evident spaces (agora) where “the common good” is deliberated and decided on. Since the mid-1970s, the spaces of the common have increasingly been eroded and radically re-cast globally. We live in an era where “speculative ontologies, cultures and epistemologies” (Baucom 2005) have subordinated the global common in its entirety. It is not just politics, economics and culture but life itself that is subject to the logic of value maximization and speculative ethos. These developments reflect the hegemonic role of financial capitalism and “*fnanciarization* of everything” (Harvey 2005). The *polis* in effect is dead. Enter the *post-polis* – where justice, the city, and/or state, knowledge, environment, community, ways of being, life styles and individual choices etc - indeed life itself – become but so many stakes in the global speculative gamble. In *post-polis* all sectors of society (political, cultural, social and economic) are subordinated to the speculative logic of financial capitalism. The ethos of speculation and calculus of value maximization are the primary codes that define the substance and form of what constitutes “the commons” and “common good”.

In the speculative era, the state is a major player and actively advances the speculative ethos. The state has become an organ that stakes environment, justice, community, identity, culture, citizen-subjects and futures, etc. as so many chips in the speculative game. A speculative state, in brief - speculating pension funds, guaranteeing and/or subsidizing risky projects, bailing out financial institutions and banks using public moneys, etc. The speculative state takes and encourages risks. Its primary task is to uphold and safeguard the interest of financial capital – witness the recent frenzy to save financial institutions and banks in the wake of the current global financial crisis.

Speculative accumulation is driven by the logic of immediate gain, or reward and the horizon of the short-run. Its logic shaped an integral part of technologies of disciplination, control and surveillance – both in times of crisis as well as growth. In the post-political condition, the common is not the self-evident space of politics but its consequence (Deleuze & Guattari 1988), i.e., secondary to the speculative logic and ethos. Citizen subjects transmute to clients and consumers. The entrepreneurial self epitomizes the ideal (citizen) subject – flexible, docile yet risk-taking all in one. Innovation, flexibility, life-long/incessant schooling and training, enhanced growth, competition and value maximization form the templates for the disciplination, control and surveillance of citizens and subjects. The technologies of government apposite to this era and ethos are speculative by nature and are better conceived as regimes or technologies of speculative of governmentality. Driven by speculative market rationality, ethos and abetted by a speculative state, to foster risk-taking subjects and speculative ways of being.

The workshop focuses on some of the major implications of the post-political condition on the state, the city and the environment. It also tries to address what alternative futures one can envisage to the global post-political condition? Can driving the logic of speculation and value maximization to its limit be a way of re-claiming “the common” and “the good”? Can we re-claim the *polis* – the agora, city, state, and the political at large, in an era when alternatives are always already chips in the speculative game?