

## **Dualities of Uncertainty. Neoliberalism and Radical Political Imaginaries in the Mediterranean Region**

*Re-Konfigurationen, CNMS, Philipps-Universität Marburg*  
*Date: September 7-8 2018*

### Workshop Description

The fact that the future is in the making – that it is yet to be determined – allows us to imagine society and social relations being differently than the present. ‘Uncertainty’ in this sense conditions the possibility for the future being worse as the present, as well as it being better.

In the neoliberal imaginary, ‘uncertainty’ has been embraced, for its exploitation provides the freedom of the possible that will drive prosperity and innovation through the perpetuation of competitive market situations. But as previously state-held (welfare) functions are devolved to the individual with the goal to totalize self-responsibility, ‘uncertainty’ has come to mean risk, stress, and precarity. “What is novel is not uncertainty” Zygmunt Bauman remarks. “What is novel is a realization that uncertainty is here to stay.” The task, then, is “to develop an art, to develop an art of living permanently with uncertainty.” Having to be ‘ready for anything’, individuals are trained to live with certain forms of economic uncertainty, in the assumption that they personally need to become more ‘resilient’ and ‘flexible’ in the face of unexpected blows to, say, their careers or pensions. The game becomes utterly permanent, rarely ever causing hope for real change.

But in times of crisis, the ontological foundations of this conception of uncertainty can be questioned altogether. Inherently uncertain themselves, crises signify situations where normative expectations do not match everyday realities. It is here where uncertainty can make possible radical imaginaries. The ‘movement of the squares’, everyday ‘quiet encroachment’, and solidarity movements across the Mediterranean have been marked by precisely such an imagination; distancing from the existing order – against and in confrontation with the practices of power – and prefiguring alternatives to that order.

This two-day workshop, organized around a set of readings, examines this duality of ‘uncertainty’ between its neoliberal conception and the conditions of possibility for the radical imagination. Participants will engage with key texts in the field and make short presentations and moderate sessions. By doing so, they are encouraged to reflect (both in discussion and in written form) upon their own projects.

### Program

#### **Day 1, September 7 2018 (10.00 – 18.00)**

On the first day, we look into the ways in which the disciplines have anticipated the uncertainties of the future. In this vein, we will make sense of ‘uncertainty’ in its relation to the subject by using neoliberalism as a hermeneutic device.

#### *Session 1 (Reading Presentation and Discussion)*

Beckert, J. (2016). *Imagined Futures. Fictional Expectations and Capitalist Dynamics.* (Expectations and Uncertainty, pp. 35-60). Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press.

Davies, W. (2014). *The Limits of Neoliberalism. Authority, Sovereignty and the Logic of Competition* (CH I: The Disenchantment of Politics Neoliberalism, sovereignty and economics, pp. 1-34; CH II: Contingent Neoliberalism: Financial Crisis and Beyond, pp. 148-187). London & Thousand Oaks: Sage.

*Session 2 (Reading Presentation and Discussion)*

O'Malley, P. (2009). "Uncertainty makes us free". *Liberalism, risk and individual security. Behemoth. A Journal on Civilisation*, 2(3), 24-38.

Scharff, C. (2015). *The Psychic Life of Neoliberalism: Mapping the Contours of Entrepreneurial Subjectivity. Theory, Culture & Society*, 33(6), 107-122.

*Session 3 (Reflection on own projects)*

**Day 2, September 8 2018 (10.00 – 18.00)**

On the second day, we look into the ways in which uncertainty may well condition the possibility of radical political imaginaries to emerge.

*Session 1 (Reading Presentation and Discussion)*

Haiven, M. (2014). *Crises of imagination, crises of power. Capitalism, creativity and the commons. (CH VII: What is the Radical Imagination?, pp. 217-255).* London & New York: Zed Books.

Hage, G. (2015). *Alter-Politics. Critical Anthropology and the Radical Imagination. (CH III: Critical anthropological thought and the radical political imaginary today, pp. 49-78)* Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

*Session 2 (Reading Presentation and Discussion)*

Newman, S. (2007). *Anarchism, Poststructuralism and the Future of Radical Politics. SubStance*, 36(2), 3-19.

Segal, L. (2017). *Radical Happiness: Moments of Collective Joy. (CH VII: Living Differently, pp. 187-215).* London: Verso.

*Session 3 (Reflection on own projects)*

Participants:

Lachenal, Perrine (U Marburg)  
Neufend, Maike (U Marburg)  
Soudias, Dimitris (Athen)  
Eickhof, Ilka (The American University in Cairo)  
Malamadis, Theocharis (Scuola Normale Superiore Florence)  
Kouki, Hara (Durham University)

Estimated Costs

Travel Costs: approx. 1361,60 EUR

*Air and train travel:*

Ilka Eickhof (501 EUR + 31,60 EUR)  
Hara Kouki (250 EUR + 31,60 EUR)  
Dimitris Soudias (250 EUR + 15,80 EUR)  
Theocharis Malamadis (200 EUR + 31,60 EUR)

*(Trains: Frankfurt Airport – Marburg: 15,80 EUR)*

Accommodation: 744 EUR

3 nights / 3 participants (Welcome Hotel)

Catering: approx. 499,20 EUR

two outside dinners  
two outside lunches  
20, 80 EUR(per person and meal)

**Approx. TOTAL: 2.604,80 EUR**