



Work, Employment and Society Conference 2016 Call for Papers

Tuesday 6 to Thursday 8 September 2016

Leeds University Business School (LUBS), University of
Leeds

WORK IN CRISIS

The British Sociological Association and the *Work, Employment and Society* Editorial Board are pleased to announce that the WES Conference 2016 will be hosted by Leeds University Business School, University of Leeds. Like the journal, the conference is sociologically oriented but welcomes contributions from related fields. **The thematic focus of the 2016 conference at the University of Leeds will be 'Work in crisis'**. It is now clear that the impact of the global financial crisis has not only been profound, but enduring. Economic recovery has been slow. The crisis has not led to any fundamental reappraisal of the nature of capitalism, or how to 'govern' it. Instead, governments have sought to impose austerity and erode social protections. For the majority in work real wages have fallen, pensions have been eroded and precariousness has become more pervasive, while those without employment have been subject to ever more punitive sanctions. Inequalities have been and are set to continue increasing.

While inequality has risen to the foreground of public debate following Thomas Picketty's celebrated contribution, it has long been an area of enquiry in the sociology of work, employment and society. Picketty's analysis convincingly shows how long-term, low economic growth will drive further disparities in wealth and income. But his macro analysis offers few insights into the daily realities of those working, or aspiring to work, in the 21st Century labour market. The first concern of the conference, therefore, is to understand in a more systematic sociological sense the experiences and realities of those in work.

In looking at people's experiences 'in work' during the crisis, and particularly in relation to precarious forms work and inequalities, we ask not only traditional questions about how these are shaped by gender, race, class, disability and other social characteristics, but also how difference is (re)produced through the changing nature and organization of work. How do we understand contemporary social relations at work and the financial, personal, health and well-being crises they appear to be ushering in? What are the connections between shifts in global political economy, and the dynamics of financialisation, and the realities of work and employment? How does technology continue to change and transform our experiences of work? How are the temporalities and spatialities of work and employment structured? How does work today relate to value production? How are contemporary forms of work disciplining, engendering or creating crises for human capabilities and well-being?

In thinking about ways that we can move beyond crises in work, we are interested in the changing terrain of struggle and the ways in which market relations can be ameliorated or turned back. Historically won social protections are threatened by programmes of austerity and the reassertion of the primacy of the market. This raises important questions about how, and whether, society can respond to protect itself from the destructive nature of self-regulating markets. It also raises important questions about agency, particularly within a context of a much weakened labour movement. How are labour movements, nationally and internationally, challenging the degradation of contemporary work? The UK Trade Union Congress (TUC) asks for 'more jobs', while

the New Economic Foundation (NEF) makes a case for a 21 hour working week and the Green Party propose a 'basic income'. We ask: which other demands are being made and which strategies are successful? What are the political formations necessary or working in the current conjuncture to challenge precarious forms of work? Where are the bases and sites of power from which people are organizing within and across their workplaces? How do we better protect those who are not in, or are unable to undertake, paid work, and those experiencing from the most extreme forms of precarious work?

Finally, we want to consider the ways in which we might move beyond work in the crisis and the crises work is producing, provoking questions about how theorists and social actors are imagining and enacting a life beyond work. We ask contributors/participants to examine the successes and otherwise of worker co-operatives, reclaimed factories and forms of self-reproduction outside the wage relation. We ask participants to explore, for example, how 'post-work politics' are theorised and how these are translating into mainstream lexicon; which narratives of human value can be generated to contest the work ethic and the crises it creates and how new subjectivities are being produced that can move beyond work as we know it.

ABSTRACT SUBMISSIONS

We welcome abstract submissions in three separate categories:

Conference papers: Abstracts should be up to 500 words. While we particularly encourage papers reporting research findings, we also welcome abstracts related to sociological theory, social policy, 'works in progress' or those testing out new and exciting ideas. Further guidance can be found at the end of this call for papers.

Special sessions: Abstracts of up to 500 words. These may offer theoretical, empirical, methodological or policy-related contributions. The sessions will last for 1.5 hours and, while we anticipate that most Special Sessions will involve three speakers, with or without a discussant, more creative formats are welcome. Further guidance can be found at the end of this call for papers.

Pre-conference doctoral workshop: This workshop aims to be inclusive. Doctoral students are very welcome to submit conference papers to the main conference, but there will also be a pre-conference doctoral workshop before the main conference starts, with a dedicated social event. Abstracts should be up to 250 words and there will be opportunities for feedback as well as opportunities to meet fellow students before the conference itself starts. Papers submitted to the doctoral pre-conference workshop may also be submitted to the main conference. Further guidance can be found at the end of this call for papers.

Abstracts may nominate one of the dedicated conference streams (see below) or be written for the open stream. They should be submitted to:

<http://portal.britsoc.co.uk/public/abstract/eventAbstract.aspx?id=EVT10478>

The abstract submission deadline is **Monday 7th March 2016**

For further details please visit

<http://www.britsoc.co.uk/events/wes-conference.aspx>

Enquiries to: events@britsoc.org.uk

CONFERENCE THEMES

- Global political economy, comparative analysis and the changing regulatory role of the state
- Social movements, unions, representation and voice
- Transnational labour migration

- Professions, occupations, skills and social mobility
- In and out of work poverty/ precariousness
- The new and old inequalities
- Gender, work and social reproduction
- Unpaid and unfree work
- Body work and emotional labour
- New technology, the green economy and sustainable economy and work
- Open Stream

GUIDANCE

Conference papers

Abstracts should be up to 500 words long, not including references. In these the contribution made by the paper should be clearly set out, with brief references to relevant debates in the literature, methodology where appropriate and research findings. It is expected that conference papers will not have been accepted for publication elsewhere.

Special sessions

Proposals are invited for Special Sessions at WES 2016. We anticipate between 4-6 Special Sessions, which will be scheduled for a dedicated slot in the conference timetable. Special Sessions provide an opportunity for a focused presentation and discussion of a specific topic related to the overall conference programme and can offer theoretical, empirical, methodological or policy-related contributions. The sessions will last for 1.5 hours and, while we anticipate that most Special Sessions will involve three speakers, with or without a discussant, more creative formats are welcome. The organisation of Special Sessions will be the responsibility of the Special Session organisers and we expect all contributors to commit to registering for the conference.

We expect Special Sessions to be reasonably detailed as we anticipate a highly competitive selection process. All proposals will be subject to review by the conference organising team. Proposals should be structured as follows:

- Special Session Title
- Sessions organisers (with affiliations and contact details)
- Brief abstract or description of session (up to 500 words)
- Details of participants (with affiliations and contact details) stating whether they have been invited or are confirmed.
- Paper titles and brief abstracts for all papers to be presented in the session (250 words per paper)

Proposals must be submitted to [BSA email address] no later than 7th March 2016. Initial expressions of interest or for further guidance please contact the Special Sessions Chair, Dr Vera Trappmann: V.Trappmann@leeds.ac.uk

Pre-conference doctoral workshop.

Abstracts should be up to 250 words in length and may focus on any aspect of the PhD process. For those in the final stage of their studies who are writing up research findings these may be presented in the same format as main conference abstracts, with a clear contribution/message set out, brief references to relevant debates in the literature and research findings. For others, this workshop aims to be inclusive and abstracts are encouraged on any aspect of the PhD process including research design, fieldwork, negotiating access, research ethics, managing your supervisor or any other topic you would find it useful to have feedback on.