

ILPC 2019 Special Stream No. 1

## **‘Solidarity in Times of Crises: Labour process dynamics and socio-political orientations’**

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This stream focuses on theory and research on changes in working life and its effects on political orientations with a special focus on issues of societal solidarity. The past decades have been characterized by massive socio-economic change: the mobility of capital has increased strongly producing a permanent threat of company relocations; structural change in the economy and financialized management have increased job insecurity; and austerity policies have questioned social protection for many. These developments have had consequences for the pressures at work and the competition between workers. At the same time authoritarian tendencies can be observed in many Western democracies and politics in several countries (e.g. Austria, France, Germany) tend to attack the regulation of the labour market and institutions of the organized labour movement.

The populist radical-right successfully capitalises on people’s anxieties by blaming scapegoats for society’s problems and offering simple political answers. However, increased job insecurity, heightened pressures at work and growing inequalities do not necessarily lead to authoritarianism, nationalism and xenophobia. Many people voice democratic and universal-solidary protest against the worsening of living and working conditions and join progressive social movements, particularly in Southern Europe. These opposing responses reflect a growing tension between nationalist and/or ethnic-based concepts of solidarity, on the one hand, and class-based and transnational ones on the other.

Electoral success of right and far right parties in many (European) countries in the past decades indicate that an increasing share of people feel attracted by political parties that propose ethnic or nation-based – excluding - concepts of solidarity. Similar developments can be observed at the workplace: solidarity within the workforce of companies is increasingly restricted to certain groups (e.g. core employees) and excluding others. Moreover, even among union activists and works councils increasingly members or representatives of populist radical-right parties can be found.

The special stream aims to investigate the link between recent changes in working and living conditions (intensified competition among workers, growing work intensity and job insecurity, reduced opportunities to voice grievances, increase of unemployment and precarious work, cuts and restrictions in welfare systems etc) and their effects on political orientations with a focus on issues of solidarity. Although this relation is often discussed as a problem of trade union organizing, this stream is more interested in papers that explore the link between

transformations in work and employment and broader socio-political orientations regarding social justice and democracy (e.g. welfare chauvinism, attitudes towards refugees, authoritarianism, class solidarity, socio-ecological transformation etc.).

With this focus, the stream on the one hand takes up concerns of the early labor process theory exploring the link between different forms of labour control and their effects on class consciousness and class formation. On the other hand it supports attempts to transcend the focus of labour process analysis on the workplace level addressing the articulation between the dynamics of the labour process and broader societal developments. The stream further overlaps strongly with the general theme of the 2019 conference on ‘Fragmentations and Solidarities’ as it puts a focus on societal solidarity and connects it to current developments in the working world such as increased fragmentations.

Examples of research questions we are interested in include:

- What are the lived experiences of workers and their subjective perceptions of working conditions and fragmentations of employment and how do they influence concepts of solidarity?
- What different attitudes and political orientations do people develop or strengthen in dealing with the conditions and changes in working life? How have, as a consequence, socio-political orientations (e.g. authoritarianism, nationalism, xenophobia, egalitarian claims, altruism etc.) developed over the past decades?
- How do changes in work and employment and their perceptions impact on socio-political orientations?
- How are positional suffering and lived experiences related to the labour process articulated with views on wider societal developments?
- What are the interrelations between trade-union activism, socio-political orientations and support for political parties? If and how are trade union members attracted by the extreme right?
- What are the differences and similarities between different countries and how can they be explained?
- How can individual reactions to the crisis and socio-economic change be related to ongoing symbolic struggles over different forms of solidarity in Europe?

We will explore possibilities to publish papers in a book or special issue of a journal after the conference.

**Please submit abstracts via the International Labour Process Conference website ([ilpc.org.uk](https://www.ilpc.org.uk)) by the deadline of 26 October 2018.**

For information on the ILPC 2019 and the Calls for Papers for the General Conference and the other Special Streams please go to <https://www.ilpc.org.uk/>