



Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin
INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

Working Futures
International Conference on “Solidarity at Work”
14-15 November 2019
Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin

Call for Applications
Deadline for submission: 30 April 2019

Launched in 2018 by the Wissenschaftskolleg and the International Research Center Work and Human Life Cycle in Global History (re:work), the transnational network *Working Futures* brings together sociologists, historians, philosophers, economists, law experts and anthropologists to discuss current transformations in the world of work and the epistemological challenges they raise for the historical and social sciences. The goal of the network is to create a space for mutual exchange and understanding with respect to the futures of work, as well as work of the future, among scholars from different disciplines and countries while centered around a Franco-German nucleus. It endorses the premise that thinking about the futures of work requires an in-depth knowledge and analysis of its contemporary mutations (the concrete forms they take, their causes and repercussions). To this end, the network has developed an approach which examines the transformations of work at the intersection of four processes: siliconization, financialization, ecologization and democratization.

Conference Theme

The term “solidarity” seems to have fallen out of theoretical fashion despite the fact that it has a long history of describing the shared struggles of those oppressed by economic or political power structures. This conference aims to explore the past, present and future of “solidarity at work” on both the conceptual and empirical level. Its focus is on the world of work, which it wants to investigate from a transnational perspective. How have the concepts, conceptions and categories of solidarity shaped labor and the labor movements of different countries? What about the divergent conceptual meanings and practices in these assorted contexts? How have power relations as well as people’s everyday life been changed by the various practices related to solidarity? How do technological and managerial changes help to shift ideas and practices of solidarity? Do we see new forms emerging? Who are the agents of “solidarity at work” and what are the concrete mechanisms involved? More broadly, what are the levers and brakes of solidarity in the workplace today?

We want to explore these themes along three axes:

1) The History of the Concepts, Conceptions and Categories of Solidarity from a Transnational Perspective

“Solidarity” is a concept that is easy to caricature because of its abstractness. But there are also more concrete conceptions and categories of solidarity that guide social practices and are embedded and expressed in them. Why has the concept of solidarity, narrowly defined as workplace solidarity, seemed to have lost its resonance? Has it been supplanted by other concepts such as “commons” or *Gemeinwohlfirtschaft*? Which actors are involved in the production of categories of solidarity and in which social fields do these categorization processes take place? The first panel is interested in the genesis of such concepts, conceptions and categories and their long-term development in different countries. While the transnational network *Working Futures* focuses on a comparison between France and Germany, we also invite submissions that take into account other national traditions or transnational comparisons.

2) Past and Present Practices of Solidarity at Work

How do workers and other agents translate the abstract idea of solidarity into concrete practices, and what effects do these practices have? What impact does the increasing role of automatization and digitalization have on the conception and practice of solidarity not only in the workplace but in everyday life? The second panel is interested in exploring those certain case studies from the past and present which throw light on what “solidarity” means in practice. In addition we want to analyze whether these case studies can be understood by the traditional concepts, conceptions and categories of “solidarity” as well as just how theory and practice have influenced each other.

3) Future Solidarity at Work

Many commentators predict that the world of work will become increasingly fragmented not least because of new technologies which disrupt the traditional workplace and hence undermine the social ties among co-workers. But we also see new forms of solidarity in play. Are these merely new expressions of the old concept of solidarity, or do we need new certain conceptual tools for grasping these phenomena? This third panel is interested in both descriptive and normative accounts of new forms of solidarity and what “solidarity at work” could mean in the future.

Submission

Interested researchers are invited to send their **proposals** (800-1000 words) together with a **CV**, **contact information** and a **list of publications** to the following address: rele@wiko-berlin.de

Deadline: 30 April 2019

Notification of acceptance: 1 June 2019

Accommodation and travel costs will be covered for participants in the conference.

Convenors

Sasha Disko (Center for Metropolitan Studies, TU Berlin)

Lisa Herzog (TU Munich)

Bénédicte Zimmermann (Centre Georg Simmel, EHESS & Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin)