

Call for papers: New Work - New Problems? Gender Perspectives on the Transformation of Work

Conference of the Gender Studies Committee of the Swiss Sociological Association and the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (LUASA)

7th-8th September 2023

Lucerne – Zentralstrasse 9

Conference language: English

Keynote 1st day: Prof. Lena Hipp, Ph.D., WZP (Berlin Social Science Center)

Keynote 2nd day: Prof. Dr. Karin Schwiter, UZH (University of Zurich)

New work – new problems? Since the 20th century, paid employment has played a central role in guaranteeing social integration and livelihoods. In the tradition of Frithjof Bergmann, “new work” indicates a shift where paid work should serve the workers (and not the opposite) and provide them with meaning and satisfaction. Digitalization, globalization and the resulting flexibilization shape the way we work. Autonomy at work, self-organization and flexible working patterns are on the upswing as “new work”. We observe, however, an ambiguous impact on the workers. Precarity, exhaustion and exploitation, thus the opposite of the ideal “new work”, is what many employees currently experience. Furthermore, new work is ambivalently intertwined with the question of gender equity: Changing working conditions and environments nourish hope for greater gender justice in the context of more egalitarian work cultures. Naturalizing arguments that women – as better team players – will profit from these changes fall short, since research has shown that the flexibilization of working conditions has reinforced and normalized the high commitment employees should show towards their employer, including working late and full-time. This reproduces the prototype of the ideal male worker.

In the aftermath of the pandemic: The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted various contradictions: whereas opportunities for gender equality have emerged, like the implementation of innovative family-friendly measures in some economic sectors or companies, not all employees take advantage from this situation, leaving to paradoxical effects and unintended consequences of workplace innovations. Gender, in interaction with function, position, education or migration status plays a significant role. Further, the care gap between men and women has widened during the pandemic. Especially single parents and people caring for children and adults in need were affected most negatively by lockdown and quarantines. It became clear, once again, that care work is essential, and that economic growth is inevitably based on unpaid and poorly paid care work largely performed by women. Whether this new visibility might lead to a reevaluation of care work has yet to be seen.

Global dependencies and power: The pandemic also highlighted the global dependencies, hierarchies, and the privileges of the Global North (e.g., broken care chains by live-in caregivers, supply shortages of protective material, shuttle migration). The changes in the global division of labor and migration regimes are also structured by gender and other dimensions of inequalities. The last years have served as a large-scale experiment of remote working. New “anywhere jobs”, traditionally performed by a few highly skilled workers, no longer recognize geographical boundaries, and can be outsourced to countries in the Global South.

Towards greater gender justice: “New work” may reveal a potential for fairer living conditions and life chances. Recent figures from Switzerland show that the demand for greater social recognition and remuneration of unpaid care work is high. This brings a well-known feminist claim to the fore: instead of primarily focusing on paid employment, there is a need for a broader understanding of work. Whether the current transformations will eventually lead to the emancipatory sense of “new work” and to greater gender justice, or whether the problematic trends towards precarity, exploitation, and work intensification will prevail, is a complex question.

Against this background, the conference aims to discuss the transformation of work and its consequences for gender norms, the resulting division of labor and the (new) balance of paid and unpaid care work.

We invite theoretical and empirical - qualitative and quantitative - papers that engage with the conference theme. Papers that contribute towards practical or policy recommendations are welcome.

Papers can for example address the following questions:

New work – new problems? What are the opportunities and risks of changing working conditions for gender relations (in interaction with other social inequities, as class and “race”)? How can we better understand the ambivalent potential of the digitalization and workplace innovations for gender justice? And how this potential is shaped in different sectors and occupations?

In the aftermath of the pandemic: What is the (gendered) impact of Covid-19 and related public health measures on precarity and work-life balance? How can new inequalities between essential and non-essential workers or between social groups be shaped? What can we learn from best practice examples in companies? How do gender and other inequalities affect the way how new flexibilised working conditions and working time regimes are negotiated – in everyday practices at the workplace and between social partners?

Global dependencies and power: To what extent and how are gender and other inequalities embedded in the way digitalization affects the international division of labor? To what extent does "remote work" give women in the Global South access to highly qualified and better paid jobs? How do global care chains characterized by precarious female employment develop?

Towards greater gender justice: Which legal and political regulations, e.g. on platform work, can modernize social security in a gender-just way? How will an intersectional perspective on education help to shape policies that reduce inequalities? How can we rethink and reshape the meaning of work? What are the alternatives to the hegemony of paid employment and how can we revalue care work? How should innovative social security models (e.g. basic income) look like to contribute to an equivalent relationship between employment and unpaid care work?

We invite contributions from the social sciences and all related disciplines.

Please send an English abstract of max. 2000 characters by e-mail to eva.granwehr@hslu.ch.

Deadline for abstracts: 8th January 2023.

A decision on the contribution will be made by **28th February 2023**.

No full papers will be requested for the conference. However, authors of accepted abstracts who have registered at the conference will be encouraged to submit full papers for publication in a Special Issue with the Swiss Journal of Sociology. Full paper submissions will be subjected to a double-blind review process.

The conference will be held in the city of Lucerne, Switzerland, at Zentralstrasse 9. Two keynotes will introduce and discuss the importance of the topic and open the floor for the sessions. On Thursday evening (7th September) participants will discover Lucerne by joining a feminist city walk.

The conference will wrap up with an input on practical implications of the scientific discussions. Updates on the program will be available on the [conference website of the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts](#).

Scientific Committee: Christina Bornatici MA (Lausanne), PD Prof. Dr. Gesine Fuchs (Lucerne), Eva Granwehr MA (Lucerne), Prof. Dr. Irene Kriesi (Zollikofen), Prof. Dr. Lucia M. Lanfranconi (Lucerne), Prof. Dr. Brigitte Liebig (Olten), Dr. Martina Peitz (Zürich), Prof. Dr. Stephanie Steinmetz (Lausanne), Dr. Isabelle Zinn (Lausanne).

The conference is supported by the Interdisciplinary Cluster “Digital Transformation of the Working World” (at the LUASA) and the Swiss Academy of the humanities and social sciences” (SAGW/ASSH).