

****Call for Papers****

Talk on Trust and Europe's Crisis of Representation

7-8 December 2017, Woolf Institute, Cambridge (UK)

Convenors: Jan-Jonathan Bock (Woolf Institute), Caroline Humphrey (King's College, Cambridge), and Jonathan White (London School of Economics and Political Science)

Keynote speakers

*Richard Sennett (London School of Economics and Political Science)

*David Runciman (University of Cambridge)

*Paul Weller (Coventry University)

We invite 250-word abstracts for an interdisciplinary workshop on the prevalence of talk on trust in Europe. The event will be held at the Woolf Institute in Cambridge, 7-8 December 2017. Please send your abstracts and a brief CV to Jan-Jonathan Bock (jjb71@cam.ac.uk) by 6pm on Friday, 2 June 2017. Selected participants will be asked to submit 6,000-word papers for pre-circulation in November.

Outline

Across Europe, the economic and political realities established after 1945 have come under strain. Capitalism has not recovered from the financial crisis and subsequent austerity regimes. Resistance to free-trade agreements unites pan-European movements, denouncing the failure of 'the market' to benefit citizen-consumers. Digital and sharing economies announce postcapitalist forms, remodelling the superficial social relations of precarious and competitive labour. In attempts to explain these crises, the decline of trust in capitalism's ability to satisfy desires for protection, safety, and sociality is routinely invoked. Plural democracies face similar dissatisfaction. Brexit, anti-migration hostility, and new nationalisms interrupt the trajectory towards a more settled, multicultural, and multi-faith Europe. A sense of disenfranchisement is exacerbated by the failure of institutions to devise persuasive models of community life that address growing diversity and desires for solidarity. Cultural heterogeneity and religious difference are accused of undermining shared values. Diversity is assumed to erode social and political alliances. Pundits and citizens explain the rise of anti-establishment antagonism, anxiety, and dissatisfaction with pluralism by referring to 'a lack of trust'.

In crisis talk, the decline of trust is offered as the key reason for deteriorating relations between citizens and community life, political institutions, and economic frameworks. We want to ask: why is there so much talk about trust, and what does this reveal about our time? What work is performed by discourses on trust, distrust, and the absence of trust in debates about disenchantment and crisis? When talk of trust is central in explanations of changing attitudes, what is perhaps neglected or concealed? What do debates about lacking trust reveal regarding expectations of statehood,

representation, socio-religious relations, community life, the economy, and political agency? Are there new actors, groups, or ideologies to which citizens attach trust? Finally, does the discourse regarding a lack of trust towards economic, religious, and political actors affect how people talk about trust in personal relationships and private life? Through the use of trust as a central concept in crisis talk, citizens reflect on its meanings and consequences. We want to explore these reflections on trust and its significance for community life, and examine what they reveal regarding the political, religious, and economic conditions of a crisis-ridden continent.

We invite submissions that engage with one or more of the following questions:

*To what extent are discourses on declining trust connected with late capitalist cultures, their employment types, and precarity? Alternative economic practices challenge established models: what role is trust said to play in new economic activities that produce different ways of living, exchanging, and connecting? How does talk about economic crises affect trust discourses?

*What is the role of cultural and religious diversity in talk about declining trust? How does cultural or religious difference feature in accounts regarding the ability to trust others? How are heterogeneity and talk about declining trust connected? What is the role of the changing religious landscape – the decline of Christian affiliations, minority groups, and non-religious people – in talk about trust?

*What does the talk of trust reveal about attitudes towards public institutions? Under which political conditions do people claim to place trust in practices of representation? How do discourses on trust or distrust shape accounts of the crisis of democratic representation? How is citizenship assumed to intersect with trust? Should mature citizens confront the state and state actors with trust or suspicion? Is the ability to trust others always assumed to be positive? How do political actors strive to remake trust?

*What is the importance of the talk on trust in discourses about populism, disenchantment, fear, and anti-establishment forces? How do emergent nationalisms frame the ability to trust some individuals, institutions, or groups, but not others? What role does the rhetoric of trust play in emergent nationalist movements?

Any questions, please contact the convenors: Jan-Jonathan Bock (jjb71@cam.ac.uk), Caroline Humphrey (ch10001@cam.ac.uk), Jonathan White (j.p.white@lse.ac.uk).