

Wednesday 7th May 2014
3.30pm – 5.00pm

Room 811, Graham Hills Building
50 Richmond Street, Glasgow, G1 1XU

Department of Human Resource Management
In conjunction with Marie Curie Changing Employment
Research Seminar

Professor Sian Moore, University of West of England

Zero-hours and the electronic monitoring of homecare work - the de-commodification of working time?

This paper demonstrates how zero hours contracts and electronic monitoring in homecare reconfigure the labour process and disrupt the construction of working time as paid time. Historically, care labour has been largely de-commodified in the household, with the right of women to have their labour commodified crucial to women's emancipation since access to paid work is the key to social rights (Folbre and Nelson, 2000). Globally the retreat of state support for social reproduction may result in the refamiliarisation and/or the marketisation of care. Care continues to be simultaneously seen as work and non-work (Glucksmann and Lyon, 2006). This paper asks how far, in the context of the marketization of care and financial crisis in the UK, this ambiguity has allowed the state (through the commissioning of homecare) and employers to reconfigure paid and unpaid working time, effectively reintroducing 'de-commodified' care. It argues that this has been done through the Taylorisation of care work (Dominelli & Hoogvelt, 1996) involving the widespread use of zero hours contracts, and increasingly through the electronic monitoring of the labour process. The effect is to bifurcate working time into productive and unproductive periods, with working time valid only when it is spatially anchored inside the domestic confines of the care receivers' own home. This renders statutory or voluntary minimum hourly pay rates ineffectual. In homecare technology enforces a spatial and temporal demarcation which defines paid and unpaid work, but it is zero hours contracts that facilitate the availability of care workers to the demands of work. There is then a simultaneous minute-by-minute measurement of paid working time, but a blurring of the line between paid and unpaid work. The testimonies of careworkers illustrate both the intensification and extensification of working time, but also corroborate Tuckman's description of the shifting boundaries between commodified and de-commodified time (2005). The paper finishes by considering how far care work is increasingly one example of the extension of unpaid labour in the UK post-crisis economy.

Sian Moore is Professor of Work and Employment Relations at the Centre for Employment Studies Research (CESR, Bristol Business School, University of the West of England. She has written about trade union activism (*New Trade Union activists – class consciousness or social identity?*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and on statutory regulation and employment relations (*Statutory regulation and employment relations - The impact of statutory trade union recognition*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013 with Sonia McKay). Her recent research has been on the impact of local authority commissioning on the pay and hours of domiciliary care workers for the Low Pay Commission and she is currently looking at the impact of electronic surveillance on homecare. She has also researched and published on the British Airways cabin crew dispute 2009-11.

