

**CRIMT** 20  
20  
CONFERENCE

**22-24 October**  
HEC Montréal  
Montréal, Canada

# **BETTER WORK FOR A BETTER SOCIETY**

**Actor Resilience and the  
Power of Experimentation**

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

**BETTER WORK FOR A BETTER SOCIETY**  
**Actor Resilience and the Power of Experimentation**

[www.crimt.org/CRIMT2020/home.html](http://www.crimt.org/CRIMT2020/home.html)

The **CRIMT International Partnership Project on Institutional Experimentation for Better Work**, which brings together the **Interuniversity Research Centre on Globalization and Work (CRIMT)** and an **international network of associated partner centres and researchers**, will host a conference on *Better Work for a Better Society: Actor Resilience and the Power of Experimentation*. This conference will take place at **HEC Montréal** (Montreal, Canada) from **Thursday October 22<sup>nd</sup> to Saturday October 24<sup>th</sup> 2020**.

Fault lines of change are disrupting the world of work: digital technologies, the recasting of company strategies, the disruption of global production networks, climate change, shifts in identities and values, political unrest and changes in public policy. As a result, existing institutions for the regulation of work and employment which were originally developed during the post-war period to provide protections and opportunities for workers via the role of trade unions, the welfare state, labour market regulations and skill training systems, increasingly reflect the impact of neoliberal reforms prioritizing markets, deregulation, and individualization of employment. These neoliberal reformulations of employment, work, welfare, and labour market regulations seem out of synch with the aspirations of people for better work, by which we mean productive, innovative, healthy and inclusive work, in which individuals live free from excessive insecurity and unaccountable control over their working lives, and can

contribute to their workplace and society. Quite a different picture often emerges from current changes, which are increasingly characterized by fragmented work, fissured workplaces, exacerbated inequalities and discrimination, offloaded social costs, disjointed communities and disparities of power.

While these disruptions create much uncertainty and bear costs at the individual and collective levels, they also open up space for experimentation. In different national, institutional and organizational contexts, trade unions, employers, NGOs, governments and other stakeholders are engaged in processes of experimentation, in which resistance to bad work, resilience in imagining better work and a healthier society, and the power of experimentation to find enduring solutions in the re-regulation of work and employment are among the defining features.

The stakes are high since these experiments, most often in conditions of considerable uncertainty and with highly varied results, will shape our workplaces and communities of the future.

A key challenge is to bring together and aggregate our understanding of these specific processes and cases to engage researchers and world-of-work actors in developing shared learning about the common lessons on how such experimentation can make for better work and, ultimately, more sustainable and democratic societies.

This conference invites original contributions on two linked themes: first, on “Better Work for a Better Society”; second, on “Actor Resilience and the Power of Experimentation”.

**Theme 1: Better Work for a Better Society.** This conference welcomes papers and workshops that contribute to our understanding of what makes work better (or worse) and how this contributes to better (or worse) societies. Contributions may concern one or more of the following dimensions of work, the possible trade-offs between them and their implications for better (or worse) societies.

- *The allocation of social risk and opportunity.* This dimension concerns how individuals construct their life trajectories at work and beyond (e.g., outside of work, into retirement); whether such risk and life chances are individualized or mutualized through collective organizations and institutions; how equality and inequality, wealth and opportunity are organized and allocated.
- *Subordination and autonomy at work* and its impacts on workers, their families and their communities. This dimension can be manifested through basic dignity, health and safety, work intensity, possibilities to contribute to work organization and work outcomes, the psychosocial dimensions of work and wellbeing, including harassment and stress, and the ability to negotiate the boundaries between work and other aspects of people’s lives.

- The *expressive and democratic dimensions of work*. This concerns the acquisition of skills and collective capabilities, in terms of individual self-realization, the ability to chart life courses, participation and collective voice at work, democracy and citizen engagement in the ethical and sustainable development of organizations, firms and communities. It also includes experiments in forms of corporate governance, which incorporate social objectives into their core functions.

Does better (worse) work make for better (worse) societies or is it better societies that make for better work? How do organizational and social policies and practices, and in particular the existence of meaningful labour rights weaken or strengthen each of these dimensions of work? How do these different dimensions interconnect and under what circumstances do people choose or are compelled to make trade-offs between them?

**Theme 2: Actor Resilience and the Power of Experimentation.** This conference is interested in papers and workshops that focus on actor resilience and power in experimenting with their strategic repertoires. Contributions on this second theme should seek to further our understanding of social actors, social innovation, and assessments of the experimentations in which they engage.

- On **the resilience of social actors** and the recasting of their strategies, whether and how they deal with disruptions and engage in experimentation in the face of uncertainty. This can entail the combination of old and new identities, narratives, alliances, resources, strategies and collective capabilities. How do social actors maintain or rethink their strategic repertoires, from strategies of resistance to worse forms of work and neoliberal policies that lead to the weakening of the social fabric to social change and new alliances and collaboration in economic and social development? Do particular actor attributes and strategies make a difference?
- On **the power of experimentation**, description, analysis and comparison of cases of experimentation to achieve some form of better work, be it through reduced risk and enhanced opportunities, reduced subordination and greater autonomy, or more expressive and democratic work, and the factors that contribute to such advances (or reversals). How do we understand the results as regards better or worse societies and the strategies, tensions and trade-offs that they entail? What can we learn from success and failures? Under what circumstances can experiments in the re-regulation of work overcome embedded resistance, lead to new cycles of experimentation, be scaled up and diffused on a larger scale? How can actor strategies and cases of experimentation be compared, especially within and across different regional or sectoral contexts?

Examples include, but are not limited to, actor strategies and cases of experimentation that aim, with various degrees of success or failure, to:

- promote alternate or renewed forms of solidarity, risk-sharing, skill acquisition, and collective voice and representation;
- develop public policy and state initiatives seeking to achieve better work through changes in economic and fiscal policies, legal reform, enhanced access to justice, collective voice and firm governance;
- deal with climate change, by the development of Green New Deals and facilitating the transition to green jobs and sustainable development;
- shape the transition to the digital economy, by counterbalancing the power of platforms to exploit labour through extreme forms of flexibilization, algorithmic management and data harvesting, with worker driven initiatives to re-regulate and restructure forms of employment through revitalizing collective forms of solidarity inside the new economy;
- tackle issues of gender inequality that are being reshaped by the growing interpenetration of work and home life as a result of changes in welfare and in the technological possibilities of home-based work related to the growth of the platform economy;
- link the struggles of migrant workers, human trafficking and the growth of new forms of slavery to broader issues of dignity at work and in the wider community;
- achieve equity, diversity, inclusion and rectify structural inequalities and disparities of wealth in markets and organizations that are not addressed through existing organizational and institutional arrangements;
- contribute to better work and better societies through innovation in multinational companies and their supply chains, notably through the re-articulation of actors and sources of regulation, experimentation with corporate policies and initiatives, international union coalitions, transnational social movements, and national and international soft and hard legal instruments;
- engage in forms of corporate governance such as employee-owned companies, cooperatives, etc. and companies which incorporate social objectives into their core functions, e.g., the benefit corporation model in the US, the Community Interest Corporation in the UK and the B Corps certification model, and explore their impact on employee aspirations to democracy and engagement at work;
- develop high-road ecosystems in cities, industries and regions that connect better work with better societies, including the development of local strategies to facilitate better work such as community wealth building, anchor institutions and good work procurement strategies, as well as multipartite skills upgrading and training initiatives;

For both of these two themes, the conference organizers welcome paper and workshop proposals that contribute to practical and policy implications in terms of better or worse workplaces, organizations, communities and societies, in both developing and emerging economies; intersectional analysis as regards transversal impacts on equality, equity, diversity, inclusiveness, social reproduction, democracy and citizenship; and comparative and multidisciplinary analysis of strategies and cases of experimentation.

We are also interested in how cross-cutting variations impact actor resilience and strategies, processes of experimentation, the experience of better (or worse) work and how these translate into better (or worse) societies. These variations include, but are not limited to, employment status (salaried, agency work, contractual, etc.), the organization of work, firms and supply chains, the access to collective organization, legal frameworks and social policies; and gender, race and migration status.

The Partnership Project values diversity in the communities we bring together and is committed to inclusion and equity in conference activities.

### **Submitting a proposal**

We are inviting researchers, including graduate students, to submit original paper and workshop proposals in English or French.

As well as single-paper proposals, we strongly encourage researchers to submit proposals for workshops of linked papers (four papers or three papers and a discussant), symposiums (two or more linked workshops on a common theme) and workshop panels that involve both labour market actors and academic researchers, as well as a diversity of voices (four or five participants). Individual paper proposals should be a maximum of 2 pages, identify the authors and their institutional affiliation, and outline the nature of the study (including the main lines of analysis and methodology as relevant). Workshop proposals should be 3-5 pages in length, identify all participants and their institutional affiliation, and include details on the contribution as a whole (i.e., the theme of the workshop or symposium), as well as on each individual contribution (authors, affiliations and 2-3 paragraphs for each).

All proposals will be subject to competitive review. We will do our utmost to provide a timely response to proposals so that authors can secure funding to attend the conference. All participants must cover their registration fee, travel and other expenses.

**The deadline for the submission of proposals is Tuesday April 14<sup>th</sup> 2020.**

Proposals must be submitted by email to Nicolas Roby, CRIMT Scientific coordinator, at: [nicolas.roby@umontreal.ca](mailto:nicolas.roby@umontreal.ca). For questions regarding the submission procedure or the organization of this conference, please check the [conference website](#) or send us an email at [crimt2020@crimt.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:crimt2020@crimt.onmicrosoft.com).

The Interuniversity Research Centre on Globalization and Work ([www.crimt.org](http://www.crimt.org)) and its international network of partners look forward to rich and interesting debates by academics from a wide range of countries, including emerging economies.



The **CRIMT International Partnership project** on *Institutional Experimentation for Better Work* brings together the following research centres:

- **Automotive Policy Research Centre (APRC - McMaster University)**
- **Centre de droit comparé du travail et de la sécurité sociale (COMPTRASEC - Bordeaux)**
- **Centre de recherches interdisciplinaires Democracy, Institutions & Subjectivity (CriDIS - UCL)**
- **Centre for Law in the Contemporary Workplace (CLCW - Queen's University)**
- **Centre for People, Organisation and Work (CPOW - RMIT)**
- **Centre for Work, Organisation and Wellbeing (WOW - Griffith University)**
- **El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF)**
- **Employment Research Unit (ERU - Cardiff University)**
- **European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)**
- **Faculty Research Group for Perspectives on Work (FSSL-RGPW - University of Bristol)**
- **HEC Montréal**
- **ILR School (Cornell University)**
- **Interuniversity Research Centre on Globalization and Work (CRIMT-RS)**
- **Institut de Recherche Interdisciplinaire en Sciences Sociales (IRISSO - Paris Dauphine)**
- **Institute for the Analysis of Change in Historical and Contemporary Societies (IACCHOS - UCL)**
- **Institute of International Management (IIM - Loughborough University London)**
- **Labour Law and Development Research Laboratory (LLDRL - McGill University)**
- **School of Labor and Human Resources (SLHR - Renmin)**
- **School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR - Rutgers University)**
- **Université de Montréal**
- **Université Laval**
- **Work and Equalities Institute (WEI - University of Manchester)**