



EXTENDED DEADLINE: 30th April 2018

Send abstracts (max 300 words) to the conveners, Teodor Zidaru-Barbulescu and Megan Laws: t.m.zidaru-barbulescu@lse.ac.uk & m.laws1@lse.ac.uk

Speakers: Matthew Carey (University of Copenhagen), Nigel Dodd (LSE), Deborah James (LSE)

This one-day workshop will be held on June 15th at LSE.

(Mis)trust, money and debt in interdisciplinary perspective

call for papers

Trust and faith are basic attributes of modern monetary systems. Trust is also often recognized as a public good, the maximization of which yields growth and harmony. When we trust—in one another, in markets, in states—we simultaneously allow these bodies to flourish, to generate profits, to bring new life, and we make ourselves vulnerable to the exploits of those who turn out to be other than what they seemed, and to the many forces beyond our control. But if we know what ‘trust’ is—or ought to be—do we therefore understand its opposite? Is ‘mistrust’ always the inverse of ‘trust’? Is it a moment of clarity – a corollary of failed projects of trusting? Is it an unwillingness to take risks borne not out of the failure of past projects, but of the absence of evidence to the contrary? Or is it an expression of certain alternative political and economic imaginaries? When viewed this way, the suggestion that mistrust leads strictly to vicious circles of societal destruction settles on uneasy ground. Are narratives of bursting bubbles, economic decline, and corrosive structural violence really the only kinds of stories that can be told when considering money and mistrust? Or do alternative narratives await the ethnographic record, narratives that hinge on questions of transparency, temporality, and intimacy in unexpected ways?

This workshop aims to explore the roles, qualities and affordances of mistrust within socioeconomic life, as well as create a space for dialogues across disciplinary boundaries and methodologies. It seeks to build upon the intermittent and disciplinarily diverse writing on trust over the past decades. One core question, for example, is not as much whether we can “trust trust” (Gambetta, 1988), but just how suspicious should we be of mistrust in the first place. This signals our call for contributions that (1) suspend assumptions about the concepts of trust and mistrust and (2) explore the expression and importance of (mis)trust in diverse political economies and sociocultural settings. What do discourses about (mis)trust reveal or conceal about the economy, states, markets, or expectations of community life? What interests and relationships accompany the expression of such moral discourses and how do they falter or gain traction? How is mistrust conceptualized and lived, and what kinds of subjunctive spaces does it cleave in intimate relations? How does (mis)trust feature in activities such as trading, lending, borrowing, brokering, paying, but also helping, caring, sharing or redistributing? Is (mis)trust really the most interesting object of study, or is it a

point of entry to more nuanced engagements with the legal or ideological means through which people attempt to negate its consequences?

We welcome submissions that engage with, but are not exclusive to (!), the following research themes:

1. Trust and commerce

Is trust important to the reality of contemporary money? Has this always been the case or is there something different about the contemporary moment? Is money a measure of our trust in other human beings to repay, or to share similar measures of value? Is (mis)trust central to the ways people relate to the state or the market? Are there new ideologies, groups or actors that galvanize mistrust or seek to elicit trust? If so, how and to what ends?

2. Trust and transparency

Around the world, mobile money and mobile phones are reshaping the ways people share wealth and relate to one another: Are such novel technologies also reshaping the way we (mis)trust one another? What are the implications of distributed ledgers, which seek to make transactions and global supply chains transparent? Do these make trust a non-issue, or does talk about trust conceal enduring problems of value to which governance will inevitably return? What efforts are there to foster transparency, so we know who to trust or mistrust, and on what basis are these conclusions made?

3. Mistrust and accountability

In what ways might legal regimes deal with the problem of trust? How do creditors and debtors appeal to discourses about trust? How do audit cultures and bureaucratic models of accountability deal with misinformation? Are legal-bureaucratic symbols used to produce legitimacy and authenticity, or alternatively to exert power and effect coercion? How might legal regimes be negating the consequences of mistrust?

4. Mistrust and subjunctive spaces

How is mistrust conceptualized and lived, and what kinds of subjunctive spaces does it cleave in intimate relations? What is the relevance of cultural diversity in talk about changing attitudes regarding community and economic life? How does difference, be it along religious, class or ethnic lines, matter – or not – in people's ability to trust others? How might (mis)trust be complicit with or emerge from narratives of growth or scarcity, and does (mis)trust feature in claims on wealth that is perceived to be abundant or excessive?