

## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

### **National Conference**

**on**

### **Labour (Un)Divided: Categories and Collectivities**

**School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata**

**18 - 20 November 2015**

### **CONCEPT NOTE**

Trade union movements in India, after independence, gained significant victories in terms of labour legislations and social security. However, this applied to a minority of 10-12% workers constituting the 'formal' economy, in which women had a minimal presence. Formalisation and masculinisation worked hand in hand and this implied that the industrial working class was understood as fundamentally male and issues specific to women were marginalised and invisibilised within this space. From the 1980s onwards, the failure of Central Trade Unions to address several issues led to the formation of alternative collectivities, mostly in the informal economy, around specific trades and categories of workers such as self-employed women. By the end of 1990s, Central Trade Unions were beginning to realise the limits of their traditional approach to organising, especially in the backlash of the Structural Adjustment Policies which shrunk the formal sector and encouraged spaces and forms of labour that remained outside the purview of existing labour laws and regulations. However, different kinds of informal workers, both in these new spaces and the old, were at various stages of organisation despite their exclusion from traditional trade unions, and had begun to wage significant battles for rights. Construction workers' struggles, for example, led to a historic legislation in the mid 1990s. Paid domestic workers, who were not even recognised as workers by mainstream unions, are now coming together to demand both rights and dignity. In this scenario, it has become imperative for unions, policymakers and scholars alike to broaden the notion and understanding of the working class, admitting its diversity in form and nature. It is necessary to recognise various kinds of work including reproductive and care work, the intersectionality of caste-class-gender, migration and new possibilities of collectivities. In this period of flux, gender is emerging as a major category at the intersection of informality and new imaginations of collectivities.

We therefore stand at a crucial moment when hitherto unheard voices are making a significant presence; when new forms of collectivities and new modes of negotiation are being explored; when working class is being redefined through the integration of multiple politics of identity that constitute the worker's location in the political economy; when the international community is divided over the inevitability of neoliberal policies on the one hand, and the need for fighting poverty, unemployment and other forms of discrimination on the other; when specificity of struggles need to be recognised while solidarities need to be built for collective resistance; and when life, livelihood and well-being face one of the most serious crises of our times. It is to understand the anxiety, challenge and promise of this moment, especially its multiple gendered dimensions, that the School of Women's Studies, supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung is organising a Conference titled 'Labour (Un)divided: Categories and Collectivities'. Some of the themes for the call for papers are listed below; however, papers beyond these themes but within the larger rubric of the conference are welcome.

**Major themes:**

1. Gender, Caste and Class: Continuities and Contradictions
2. Gendering Migration: Intermediation and Agency
3. The State, Law and Workers' Rights
4. Politics of Collectivities and the Cultures of Organisation
5. Globalisation and New Forms of Labour

For presentation of papers at the Conference, we request you to send an abstract along with a bio-note. Kindly note the following details for the submission:

Last date for submission of abstract: **23 August 2015**

Length of Abstract: 1500 words

Length of Bio-note: 100-150 words

Email ID for submission and queries: [rlsconfigm@gmail.com](mailto:rlsconfigm@gmail.com)

Conference Coordinators:

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