

HRMWE Research Seminar Series 2014-2015

Inactive Banana Time: Lean Production and the Meaning of Work in the UK Civil Service

Wednesday 28th January 2015

4:00 - 5:30pm, NUBS 2.05

Presented by

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Abstract

This article focuses on the multiple levels of meaning and attachment to work by critically examining the application of lean working methods at HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), a UK civil service department. Detailed qualitative and quantitative research reveals that such work used to offer meaning, security and a strong commitment to public service, together with elements of variety and autonomy. The post-lean world of work is marked by stringent management control, relentless workplace pressures, deleterious workplace relations and widespread discontent and disillusionment. The article contributes to key debates concerning the meaning of work and employment change in contemporary society.

Background

Andrew Smith is a Senior Lecturer in HRM and Employment Relations at Bradford University School of Management. His research interests cover public sector employment change, 'lean' working methods, work-life articulation and low-paid employment.