



European
Commission

Kick-off Workshop

DigClass

Social Classes in the Digital Age



Date: Sept. 21st–22nd, 2021
14:00–18:15 CET
Online

The DIGCLASS Project

The [DIGCLASS project](#) is born out of increasing concern in Europe about the implications of the digital revolution for social inequalities and democratic processes. The project will revise and update the rich tradition of social class analysis in social sciences to apply it to current socioeconomic structures in Europe. It will propose new taxonomies and analytic tools for social class analysis and apply them to contemporary phenomena such as the decline of the middle class and job polarisation, the effects of digital technologies on inequalities and life chances or the emergence of new types of economic relations.

The objective *is to provide a better understanding of how digital technologies alter the mechanisms that generate inequalities in the distribution of resources and life chances*, which is crucial for social policies to respond to the challenges of the digital revolution.

DIGCLASS is one of the very few [Centre for Advanced Studies \(CAS\)](#) projects hosted by the [Joint Research Centre \(JRC\)](#) at the European Commission. The JRC is the Commission's science and knowledge production in-house service. It is a Directorate-General (DG) of the European Commission. It informs and supports EU policies with independent research throughout the whole policy cycle. Within the JRC, the Centre for Advanced Studies (CAS) aims to enhance the JRC's capabilities to better understand and address complex and long-term societal challenges that the EU faces. The CAS project is hosted in Unit A5 (Scientific Development), and also includes members of Unit B4 (Human Capital & Employment).

Kick-off Workshop

The [kick-off workshop](#) will bring together 13 high-profile international experts on social inequality from different social science disciplines to discuss technological change and inequality, two topics directly under the [European Commission's priorities](#). The objective is to generate synergies with leading experts and institutions globally on these two key areas to feed the policy process relevant for the Commission.

The programme will be structured around four overarching questions:

1. Are existing systems of social protection adequate for the digital age?
2. Are contemporary societies still class-based?
3. How are digital technologies transforming the social structure?
4. Does socioeconomic position still drive political outcomes?

Each of the questions will be addressed by three to four experts in a round table format. Thus, the workshop will offer a very stimulating debate on the implications of technological change for social inequalities, aiming to promote collaborations between leading experts and institutions globally to feed the policy process for the Commission.

Access

- Join from the meeting link:
<https://ecconf.webex.com/ecconf/j.php?MTID=m396a7ea45eda1fe353363f38d3b4c201>
- Join from the web streaming links:
Tuesday, September 21st
<https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/kick-off-workshop-of-the-new-cas-project-social-classes-in-the-digital-age-2021-09-21>
Wednesday, September 22nd
<https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/kick-off-workshop-of-the-new-cas-project-social-classes-in-the-digital-age-2021-09-22>

Agenda

Tuesday, September 21st

14.00-14.15	Opening Address	<p>Jutta Thielen del Pozo, <i>Head of the Scientific Development Unit A5, Joint Research Centre, European Commission</i></p> <p>Enrique Fernández-Macías, <i>Employment and Skills Team Coordinator, Unit B4, Joint Research Centre, European Commission</i></p> <p>Lázsló Andor, <i>Secretary General, Foundation for European Progressive Studies, and former EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (2010-2014).</i></p>
14.15-16.00	Session I: Policy <i>Are existing systems of social protection adequate for the digital age?</i>	<p>Bea Cantillon, <i>Antwerp University</i></p> <p>Marius Busemeyer, <i>University of Konstanz</i></p> <p>Aaron Reeves, <i>University of Oxford</i></p> <p><i>Chair: Leire Salazar, DIGCLASS Team - Project Leader</i></p>
16.00-16.15	<i>Break</i>	
16.15-18.00	Session II: Social Class <i>Are contemporary societies still class-based?</i>	<p>John Roemer, <i>Yale University</i></p> <p>Kim Weeden, <i>Cornell University</i></p> <p>Daniel Oesch, <i>University of Lausanne</i></p> <p><i>Chair: Carlos Gil, DIGCLASS Team</i></p>

Wednesday, September 22nd

14.00-15.45	Session III: Technology <i>How are digital technologies transforming the social structure?</i>	<p>Aina Gallego, <i>University of Barcelona, IBEI and IPEG</i></p> <p>Mark Levels, <i>Maastricht University</i></p> <p>Nicole Wu, <i>University of Toronto</i></p> <p>Anke Hassel, <i>Hertie School and Jacques Delors Centre</i></p> <p><i>Chair: Davide Villani, DIGCLASS Team</i></p>
15.45-16.00	<i>Break</i>	
16.00-17.45	Session IV: Politics <i>Does socioeconomic position still drive political outcomes?</i>	<p>Jonas Pontusson, <i>University of Geneva</i></p> <p>Jane Gingrich, <i>University of Oxford</i></p> <p>Piero Stanig, <i>Bocconi University</i></p> <p><i>Chair: Guillem Vidal, DIGCLASS Team</i></p>
17.45-17.50	Conclusions	<p>Leire Salazar, <i>DIGCLASS Team - Project Leader</i></p>
17.55-18.15	Closing Address	<p>Sabine Henzler, <i>Director of the JRC Directorate A - Strategy, Work Programme and Resources, European Commission</i></p>

Who-is-Who

Session I – Policy



Bea Cantillon is a professor of social policy at the University of Antwerp. She is a fellow of the Royal Belgian Academy of Sciences and of the British Academy. Her publications include *Reconciling Work and Poverty Reduction* (with Frank Vandenbroucke) and *Decent Incomes for all* (with Tim Goedemé and John Hills), both Oxford University Press. Her expertise lies in the collecting and processing of survey data, the development of social indicators, the application of simulation models, and the interpretation of socioeconomic data in temporal and international comparative perspective.



Marius R. Busemeyer is a Full Professor of Political Science with a focus on Comparative Political Economy at the University of Konstanz and Speaker of the Excellence Cluster "The Politics of Inequality". He is also a Senior Research Fellow at the WSI, Düsseldorf. His research focuses on comparative political economy and welfare state research. Busemeyer studied political science, economics, public administration and public law at University of Heidelberg and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. He holds a doctorate in political science from the University of Heidelberg, and he worked as a senior researcher at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne. He received two major grants from the German Research Foundation (DFG)'s Emmy Noether program and the European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant scheme.



Aaron Reeves is an Associate Professor in the Department of Social Policy and Intervention at Oxford University. He is also a Research Fellow at Green Templeton College and a Visiting Senior Fellow at the International Inequalities Institute at the LSE. Aaron's studies the causes and consequences of social inequality, focusing on the political economy of health, welfare reform, and elite formation. He is currently writing a book on the history of the British elite with Sam Friedman (under contract with Harvard University Press).

Session II - Social Class



John Roemer is the Elizabeth S. and A. Varick Professor of Political Science and Economics. He is a Fellow of the Econometric Society, and has been a Fellow of the Guggenheim Foundation and the Russell Sage Foundation. His research concerns political economy, and distributive justice. He is currently teaching Political Competition and a Workshop in Political Economy. Publications include: Political Competition, Harvard University Press, 2001; Equality of Opportunity, Harvard University Press, 1998, Theories of Distributive Justice, Harvard University Press, 1996.



Kim Weeden is the Jan Rock Zubrow '77 Professor of the Social Sciences at Cornell University, where she serves as Chair of the Department of Sociology and the Director of the Center for the Study of Inequality. Kim is an affiliate of the Cornell Population Center, the Center for the Study of Economy and Society, and the Cornell Institute for Compensation Studies. Previously, she directed the CU-ADVANCE (now the Office of Faculty Development and Diversity) and chaired the Inequality, Poverty, and Mobility section of the ASA. She teaches courses on inequality, some for the Minor in Inequality Studies.



Daniel Oesch is associate professor in sociology at the Life Course and Inequality Research Centre (LINES) of the University of Lausanne. He teaches on social stratification and the life course, the labour market and employment policy. He is the author of Occupational Change in Europe (2013, Oxford University Press) and Redrawing the Class Map (2006, Palgrave Macmillan). Before coming to Lausanne, he worked at the Universities of Geneva, Pompeu Fabra and Zurich. Daniel Oesch has extensively worked on social stratification and occupational classes. He has been involved in several large surveys on unemployment in Switzerland, studying the employment trajectories after mass displacement or the role of social contacts for the access to jobs. He also continues to work on occupational change, class voting and industrial relations.

Session III - Technology



Aina Gallego is an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Barcelona and a Research Associate at Institut de Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals and the Institute of Political Economy and Governance. She has a long-standing interest in the political representation of the poor. Her book "Unequal Participation Worldwide" (Cambridge University Press) analyzed inequalities in voter turnout in a comparative perspective and argued

that turnout gaps can be reduced through institutional reforms. A related ongoing project examines if the interests of the poor are better represented by politicians of a similar socioeconomic background with detailed data about Spanish municipalities. One of her current research projects analyzes the political consequences of technological change, focusing on workers vulnerable to technological displacement.



Mark Levels is Professor of Health, Education and Work at Maastricht University. He is program director of the research program Health, Skills, and Inequality at the Research Centre for Education and the Labor Market (ROA) of Maastricht University, member of the ROA management team, fellow of the Berlin Social Science Centre (WZB), fellow of the Graduate School of Business and Economics (GSBE) of Maastricht University, and fellow of the Amsterdam

Centre for Learning Analytics (ACLA). He teaches macrosociology at University College Maastricht (UCM). Mark uses quantitative, qualitative and experimental sociological methods to study how individuals' lives are shaped by government. He leads a large international research consortium that studies how governments can mediate the impact of AI and robotization on work, education, inequality, and welfare in Europe (TECHNEQUALITY).



Nicole Wu is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto. Previously, she was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Niehaus Center for Globalization and Governance at Princeton University. She received her PhD in Political Science from the University of Michigan in 2020. Her research and teaching interests include international and comparative political economy, public opinion, the politics of technology, and labor politics. Specifically, Nicole's

work seeks to understand the political consequences of two of the most important changes in the contemporary world economy — technological change and the rise of China.



Anke Hassel is Professor of Public Policy at the Hertie School and Co-Director at the Jacques Delors Centre. From 2016 to 2019 she was the Scientific Director of the WSI at the Hans Böckler Foundation. Anke Hassel has extensive international experience and scientific expertise in the fields of the labour market, social partnership, codetermination and the comparative political economy of developed industrial nations. She was an expert in the fact-finding

committee on growth, prosperity and quality of life in the German Bundestag (2012-13); the expert commission on the future of the Hans Böckler Foundation (2015-17) and chairwoman of the expert group on Workers' Voice and Good Corporate Governance in Transnational Companies in Europe (2015-2018). She has also been a member of the German Federal Government's High-Tech Forum since January 2019.

Session IV - Politics



Jonas Pontusson is Professor of Comparative Politics at the University of Geneva. He directs an ERC-funded research project entitled Unequal Democracies, exploring how rising socioeconomic inequality affects the policy preferences of citizens and government responsiveness to different categories of citizens. Jonas holds a BA from Amherst College (1978) and a PhD from the University of California at Berkeley (1984). Prior to moving to Geneva in 2010, he taught at Cornell University (1984-2005) and Princeton University (2005-10). He has been a visiting scholar at Nuffield College (Oxford), the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in Social Sciences (Uppsala), the Russell Sage Foundation (New York), Sciences Po (Paris) and the Hertie School of Governance (Berlin). Jonas has a long-standing interest in the comparative politics of inequality and redistribution, with an emphasis on labor-market dynamics and the role of trade unions. Social class features prominently in his current research.



Jane Gingrich is a professor of political economy at the University of Oxford and tutorial fellow at Magdalen College. Her research focuses broadly on structural reforms to welfare and education systems. Her first book examined marketization in health and education. Her more recent work has looked at policy feedbacks in welfare and education reform, and the structuring power of institutions on political behavior and voting. She is currently working on two large projects. The first examines the changing fates of Social Democratic political parties, with a particular focus on the policy and political effects of attention to education as a political strategy. The second is a project is funded by a European Research Council starting grant, which looks at the development of education systems in 22 countries in the post-war period. One of the underlying questions in this research is how political coalitions emerge around particular packages of economic and social policy that allow more inclusive forms of innovation and growth.



Piero Stanig is Associate Professor of Political Science in the Department of Social and Political Sciences at Bocconi University, and a research affiliate of the Dondena and Baffi-CAREFIN research centers, also at Bocconi. His work lies at the intersection between comparative politics and political economy. His current research focuses specifically on the material drivers of voting behavior. In particular he is studying two themes: how structural economic change caused by globalization and automation lies behind the success of the radical right and the electoral realignment witnessed by advanced capitalist democracies; and how extreme weather events related to climate change affect voting behavior and public opinion in Europe.

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