

## Design and 'the Social': Mapping new Approaches to Inequality in Design

Tuesday 7 February 2017, 13.30-18.30 LSE  
Confirmed Speaker: Prof Mike Savage (LSE)

### Event Outline

'Design' is a term that is gaining momentum in social science research, with new works engaging with the term emerging in anthropology (Gunn et al 2015), cultural studies (Kimbell 2011; McRobbie 2016), science and technology studies (Farias & Wilkie 2016) and philosophy (Parsons 2015). These important works explore how actors operate in wider cultural and economic fields. Seemingly missing from this picture is a critical engagement with the ways in which designers theorise, engage with, and act upon notions of 'the social' and how these may challenge or reaffirm (social) 'inequality'. Designers are tasked with speculating about not only user-design interactions, but future ways of living. In other words, designers engage in 'sociological' practices, putting a range of 'classificatory systems' (Tyler 2015) to work in order to make sense of and design for people. 'Classing' people as part of this commercial and 'sociological work' is not only socially intentional, but consequential. It can, therefore, reaffirm or challenge 'inequality' beyond the notions of 'class' and 'capital' (Bourdieu 1986). This event looks to map out the contemporary social science research and thinking into design in order to explore how designers operate as social theorists, actors and activists. It aims to engage with the current and politically pressing debate in inequality while negotiating the specificities of design as a profession that is both creative and commercial.

### Call for Papers

We are invite contributions from academics at all career stages and across a range of disciplines exploring the following questions:

- In what ways do designers operate on and engage with 'the social'?
- What kinds of concepts emerge in relation to (social) inequalities when we look at different design processes?
- How can engaging with design practices broaden the discussion of inequality?

The notion of 'design' is deliberately kept open, but research into the following areas is encouraged: spatial design/architecture; technological design (including digital services); product design; organisational design.

**Please email abstracts (up to 300 words) and a short biography to Nell Beecham [e.beecham@lse.ac.uk](mailto:e.beecham@lse.ac.uk) by 7 January 2017.**

Applicants will be informed by 18 January 2017 if their application was successful, please be aware that this event is limited to 25 participants. Presentations will be between 15-20 minutes followed by discussion. Refreshments will be provided. This event is organized by Mona Sloane and Nell Beecham, LSE Sociology.

### Registration

BSA Member Registration £10, Non-Member Registration £25. Registration link:

<http://portal.britsoc.co.uk/public/event/eventBooking.aspx?id=EVT10539>

A small number of travel bursaries are available to delegates for this event.