

Call for Papers
Sociology of the 1980s
Department of Sociology,
University of York
A One Day Conference
on Tuesday 9 July 2024

Why are the 1980s - only one decade and yet with so much packed in - of sociological significance in the UK and beyond? The intervening years have witnessed a resurgence of interest and fascination with stories, memories and various reimaginings of the 1980s, its inequalities and its institutions. 2024 marked 40 years since the 1984 UK miners strike and nostalgic references to 80s iconography proliferate today, for example in the hugely popular Netflix show *Stranger Things*. The 1980s represent a historical moment defined by rapid cultural change and rising contradictions - where popular culture in the form of game shows and Ceefax for example offered new forms of entertainment and intensified the commodification of everyday life. Perhaps surprisingly then, the 1980s have often been overlooked within academic scholarship. The 80s are often remembered as a time of deep polarisation; north /south, the haves /have nots, producers /consumers, Scargill /Thatcher, home owner /council tenant, ITV /BBC, left /right for example, and popular notions of working class people as romantic rebels linger today. However, as Beckett (2015) has argued, in fact, the 1980s as a decade was also often a time of increasing cultural and political ambiguity and ambivalence. In order to fully understand the 1980s, its impact, contradictions and legacies, we argue that we need more research that transcends polarising accounts of the 80s and instead explores in more detail the power and impetus behind these changes. Drawing on Stuart Hall, we are interested in hearing more about how the battle for 'popular authority' was won and in particular the various ways in which industrial, political and commercial transformations mapped onto everyday life.

We need a sociology of the 80s because we *are* the 80s. It is a decade not only defined by huge inequalities, dramatic social change and rapid transformations, but also a moment where these new ways of thinking and living were firmly galvanised and remain so today. We argue that the way we live today is directly shaped by our recent past but especially by the 1980s. We are interested in hearing from scholars with an interest in this historical period particularly from a sociological perspective. We welcome papers based on established research ideas, but also those that are developing ideas and concepts in their early stages too.

We are interested in receiving abstracts that challenge some of the mythologies and scholarly absences of the 1980s and in research that reimagines the 80s. There are a huge range of possibilities here. Examples might include but are not limited to:

- Radical histories
- Campaigning and activism
- Popular culture
- BBC

- Technology
- Mass Observation
- Urban environment
- Consumption, shopping malls and entertainment
- Music
- Thatcher and Thatcherism

Please submit a short abstract of 250 words to Dr Emma Casey, Prof Dave Beer, Dr Gareth Millington and Dr Daryl Martin emma.casey@york.ac.uk by April 30 2024.