

## The Enduring Reproduction of Crises in Europe: Competition, Competitiveness and Competing Narratives

Manchester Graduate Conference – 3 June 2016

More than seven years after the onset of the Global Financial Crisis, Europe finds itself in a state of continued crisis. Ripples of the Eurozone debt crisis are still felt in several countries, whilst efforts to overcome the broader economic slowdown have yet to bear fruit. The legitimacy of European institutions is at an all time low as an increasing share of the population turns towards so-called ‘extreme’ political parties. At the same time, both internal relations among EU members (e.g. due to the migrants’ crisis) and the very membership of countries (‘Grexit’ and ‘Brexit’) are coming under stress.

In this context, radical narratives on – and often against – the European Union are competing with each other and with more mainstream views on European integration. The EU increasingly appears as convoluted and indecisive; on the other hand however, the crisis can be seen as the very *modus operandi* through which long-standing objectives of the European ‘ruling class’ are being implemented. The enduring (reproduction of) crisis in Europe leads to a series of questions that the one-day post-graduate conference aims to explore:

- To what extent can divergent national or class interests explain the growing divisions and enduring crisis of the European Union?
- Is the current crisis a crisis of competitiveness? Or is the crisis rather a way through which the rhetoric of competitiveness can be successfully used to fulfil the imperatives of the reproduction of (financialised) capital?
- How can we make sense of claims that a more ‘competitive’ financial sector would solve the prolonged economic recession? What does that imply in terms of power relations and social reproduction?
- What role does discourse or rhetoric play in legitimising European integration along with economic and social reforms that member states are required to make in the name of ‘competitiveness’?
- Does the ‘left’ need to withdraw from the EU in order to pursue an alternative economic and social model? Or should it seek to challenge the neoliberal model from within? This may include country specific examples of the challenges for ‘left-wing’ parties.

These are merely ideas to take as a starting point. The conference will accept presentations on a wide range of topics related to the European Union, its member states and their crises, understood in relation to issues of competition and competitiveness. We look forward to receiving abstracts based on diverse critical theoretical and empirical approaches.

The conference will end with a panel debate on the theme “Competing Futures of the European Left: Within or Without the EU?” Confirmed speakers include Erik Swyngedouw, Angela Wigger, and Gabriel Siles-Brügge.

Please submit your **300 word abstract** in a separate Word document clearly stating your name, affiliation and email address to [McrPoliticsConference@gmail.com](mailto:McrPoliticsConference@gmail.com) by **25 March 2016**. Successful applicants will be notified and informed of paper submission deadlines.

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