

## **Video – Collectivism - David Peetz**

**(Duration 4 min 8 sec)**

### **What is Collectivism about?**

Collectivism has really been central to the advancement of humans as a species, and it's also central to understanding workplaces and organisations. Individual owners of capital come together to form corporations, that are really what our modern model of capitalism depends upon. And those corporations, those collectives of capital, then employ workers or they hire subcontractors or whatever, they organise work, they organise the performance of work in a collective way. On the other hand, workers band together to form collectives as well. In the most formal manifestation is trade unions, but there are also lots of other ways in which it happens. Work groups are formed that create the cultures of workplaces and management often tries to shape those cultures. And there's other forms of actual resistance that employees engage in, ranging from boycotts to demonstrations, particularly when it's hard to organise formally as a collective. But also there's individual actions that might be taken to take a sickie, quit a job, spit in a customer's soup, or people might choose to undertake more collective action. That can be something that's really of interest to us, as to why that happens and how it happens.

### **What issues does Collectivism?**

Well we look at a whole range of issues. Like working arrangements and wellbeing, regulation, the institution's regulation or specific types of regulation like on consultation or whatever. Enterprise bargaining, the labour process, how paying conditions are determined and how workers respond to that. Trade unionism is one form of response to that. The collective of individual values and behaviours that people have. The history of all those things. The globalisation of work and in addition, the collective ways in which capital behaves. Whether it's as employer organisations or as finance capital and includes things like what does that mean for big picture issues like climate change, as well as what it means for power.

### **Why are issues around Collectivism important?**

Well issues around Collectivism are important because really, work is central to many people's lives and Collectivism is central to people's experiences at work. Even when they think it's not. Like people might think "oh, there's no union here so we're all individuals", but what happens to them is really a function of how capital has organised itself collectively and has sought to organise employees to behave, sometimes to think. And the responses that employees have are often a mixture of some sort of individual and collective behaviour as well. You occasionally hear people say "ah collective values aren't what they used to be" but actually the empirical data tell us that well, those collective values are still there but they're just now expressed in different ways. Of course the institutions have changed, powers have changed; it's important to know what changes have taken place, how and why. And whatever you think, these issues aren't going to go away. There will inevitably be some sort of responses to rising inequality, to greater insecurity at work, to a climate crises. Whether they're disorganised and individualistic responses like falling productivity, rioting or whether they're organised and collective, what form they take - whether it's based on excluding out groups like

migrants or more inclusive and a redistributive approach as well - we've yet to see. Whatever happens, these are big picture and important issues. Some of it does and some of it looks at dimensions of these issues, whether it's what's happening to workers, what capital does, looking back to try to understand the past or looking forward to future policy responses. Now that's not to say that all of our research takes a big picture approach. You don't get to understand the whole without having a good understanding of the constituent parts. So we're looking both at the constituent parts and the whole.