



PLUS ÇA CHANGE, PLUS C'EST LA MEME CHOSE? COUNTING WORK IN GHANA'S PAST AND PRESENT

KEYNOTE

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Abstract: Drawing on the work of Darkwah and Tsikata (2022) which uses an applied linguistics approach to interrogate the ways in which the language of work provides insights into the changing conceptions of work in contemporary Ghana, this paper takes a step back and asks a slightly different question. As conceptualised in the Darkwah and Tsikata (2022) piece, work in contemporary Ghana is evolving and thus looks different from work in Ghana of the past. In this paper, I seek to unsettle the fundamental assumption of change made in the Darkwah and Tsikata (2022) piece. Rather than take change as fact, this paper seeks to explore the extent to which what we conceptualise as work in contemporary Ghana, particularly the nature and character of work, is fundamentally different from what existed in Ghana's past. Going as far back as historical material provides, it focuses on the language used to describe work and asks what the foundational character of work – waged employment, self-employment, women's jobs, men's jobs - was for the inhabitants of the region that is now known as Ghana, discussing the differences if any from what counts as work in contemporary Ghana. I argue that while much has changed in the nature and character of work, a lot still remains the same.

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