NIKOLAUS KRACHLER
PhD candidate, Cornell University, ILR School

LERA Session Title: The Changing Nature of the Professional Employment Relationship

Paper Title: <u>Care versus Technocracy? Professional Interests and Middle Managers in English Intensive Care Nursing</u>

Paper Abstract:
Part of the British Coalition Government's health policy has been to enact austerity measures and restructure local health economies causing efficiency drives, even in trusts which are surplus-making. This paper evaluates the impact of this reconfiguration strategy on the intensive care workplace in London and the role that professional interests and institutions play in this change process.

Based on 23 semi-structured interviews and a document analysis of training documents and guidelines, the paper finds that the Coalition Government's reconfiguration strategy has been translated into the transformation of the intensive care workplace towards workforce restructuring, optimised asset utilisation and the beginnings of deprofessionalisation. This organisational transformation is limited, however, by the strength of the professional values of intensive care nurses which drives middle managers to protect the core values of the profession.

At the heart of this limited organisational transformation lies the constitution of the intensive care nursing profession in England, which is equally made up of care and technocratic logics. Resistance from operative workers occurs mostly through exiting the organisation which is facilitated by the institutional configurations of the National Health Service's internal labour market, the specialist nursing shortage, strong grievance procedures and a lack of union organising in English intensive care. The strategic importance of intensive care for hospitals as well as the strength of operative workers and of professional values drive resistance by middle managers. Organisational transformation in professional workplaces is therefore mediated by professional interests and their institutional embeddedness.