Is there a class issue at LSE?: Episode 6

In the penultimate blog of a series this week at Researching Sociology @ LSE, this blog will discuss the views of PhD student and researcher Sol Gamsu. This is part of the LSE Social Mobility Society's panel discussion, which involved student and staff speakers. *To view all blogs so far, and to find out more about the panellists, click here.*

For guidance, this panel discussion centred around 3 central questions, which were as follows:

- *What does class mean to you?*
- *What does social mobility mean to you?*
- *Is there a class issue at LSE?*

Sol Gamsu:

'My research centres around how education and social mobility have become entwined in the system. Before going further with this discussion, I'd like to read you a quote from a student. "The river divides my life; I have two lives, one is on each side of the river." This quote is from a student living in 1959. [This received surprised reactions from our student panellists.] Class at universities is deeply structural, and deeply traumatic. We can trace it back to education policy, where it wasn't accessible for everyone until recently in history. The school leaving age wasn't raised, and school wasn't accessible for all until 1944, and this class and social mobility ladder has persisted. This logic of selecting a given few, as other panellists have raised, is pernicious in the structure.

In terms of the LSE, the LSE culture needs to be exploded. Many of the students on this panel today have discussed feelings of isolation, so it seems that it is not uncommon, but part of a wider structure and culture. We must acknowledge the importance of working class students seeing themselves in academic and university spaces – take the LSE cleaners, for example; wouldn't it be amazing if they could provide a lecture? This can practically happen, as the LSE has Widening Participation; it is questionable whether the support is available once these students are actually in the university. But we have resources, and change can happen.'

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