

WORKSHOP

Socialization and Skill: The Master Apprentice Relationship in a Long Term Perspective

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Venue: London School of Economics

Organisation:

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ABSTRACT

The history of early modern apprenticeship is now firmly part of the historical agenda. Much recent work has been carried out by economic historians who analyse apprenticeship as part of the process of human capital formation. They generally consider apprenticeship primarily to be a way to invest in skills, with the crucial problems being understanding how the incentives to invest time or money were aligned for master and apprentice, and what consequences different kinds of training system had for economic divergence in the premodern world. The institutional context – which in early modern Europe especially is often seen as dominated by urban craft guilds - is mainly brought in to explain contract enforcement or barriers to entry.

Research into the social and cultural context of learning and upbringing has largely followed a different agenda, however. To historians working in this context, apprenticeship is often seen as a form of socialization and upbringing. The master-apprentice relationship is not examined as an economic contract, but is instead seen as an organising framework for the social interaction between two groups. The central processes in this context are the management of social and geographical mobility, and securing domestic power and hierarchy through different forms of disciplining.

Our conference sets out to re-engage these two strands of research in order to build a bridge between the analyses of economic and socio-cultural historians. By taking into account concepts and methods from both types of history writing, we expect that participants will shed new light on the master-apprentice-relationship, its socio-cultural and institutional embedding, and its economic and social outcomes. We seek contributions that will take a long term perspective as well as more specific case studies.

The key issue we seek to explore is the extent to which paying attention to both economic and socio-cultural logics can help us better explain the nature and characteristics of the master-apprentice relationship, and how this differed over time and between different contexts. Can we observe shifts in the balance between paternalism and patriarchy on the one hand, and contractual, commercial imperatives on the other, in the ways in which masters and apprentices lived and worked together?

Within specific papers, ways of addressing this broader question might include explorations of some of the distinctive features of historical apprenticeship:

- Why did so many apprenticeships end early? Were the underlying factors economic (e.g. wage-related) or socio-cultural (e.g. status related) in nature?
- To what extent did apprentices live under the roof of their master and what was the purpose and impact thereof on the training and the master-apprentice-relationship?
- How can we understand the trade-off between learning and working? Should long term transformations in such features as the need to perform household chores or the ability to earn wages be understood from an economic or rather a socio-cultural perspective (or both)?
- What was the impact of proletarianisation over the long-run in reshaping the master-apprentice relationship? Were apprentices transformed into cheap work force as the early modern period progressed, and what did this mean for socialization and training?

We especially welcome papers who examine apprenticeship from a long term perspective and encourage comparative approaches, including non-European ones. Please send your abstract of about 500 words to sietske.vandenwyngaert@uantwerpen.be before **1 February 2019**.