

Newsletter N. 11: Working Group Meeting at Re:Work in Berlin

Dear members of the ELHN Working Group “Free and Unfree Labour”,

From 2 to 4 November 2017, the second conference of the European Labour History Network (ELHN) has taken place in Paris. Our working group had organized two sessions and a working group meeting on Thursday and it was great to see how the discussion intensified over the day. At the end, we stated that there really is a strong interest among the members of this working group to go beyond the classical conference hopping and sessions meeting and to work together and move forward content-wise. We therefore decided to organize a second rather informal **working group meeting** like the one we had in Amsterdam last year for next year. The meeting will take place **at re:work in Berlin**. Andreas Eckart, Jürgen Kocka and Felicitas Hentschke are happy to host us at their institute (<https://rework.hu-berlin.de/de/aktuelles.html>) and some of the current re:work fellows might join us for discussion. For this meeting, we would like to take up two topics we were dealing with during our Paris discussion:

- 1) **Historical Semantics of Dependency:** Starting point of our debate was the fact that historians working on unfree labour relations in non-European or premodern societies are lacking an analytical language derived from their own objects of study. The semantic analysis of our respective source languages and their possibly complicated translations was therefore suggested as a good starting point in order to “provincialize” the interpretation matrix coined by the modern West. Juliane Schiel presented the idea of a collaborative handbook on “Semantics of Dependency” and would like to discuss possible methodological approaches and ways of structuring the project with the group. This first part of the workshop will therefore be prepared by Juliane Schiel, Johan Lund Heinsen and Claude Chévaleyre.
- 2) **Sites of Coercion:** Starting from Marcel van der Linden’s suggestion to study degrees and moments of coercion, that had been discussed extensively during our last working group meeting in Amsterdam, Christian De Vito launched the idea to turn to sites of coercion. By this concept, we understand both a specific spatial context (e.g. one city or one village) and specific institutional settings (e.g. one plantation, one factory, one household). This notion additionally invites to address the way connections among sites influence configurations of labour within each site. By using a micro-spatial approach (as recently suggested by Christian De Vito and Anne Gerritsen) and by putting these results in a trans-epochal comparative perspective, the group might develop new insights for the understanding of free/unfree labour relations across time and space. The second part of our meeting will thus focus on sites of coercion and will be prepared by Christian De Vito, Jeannine Bischoff and Giulia Bonazza.

For this meeting, we would like to suggest two different dates and ask you to **fill in the doodle** by December 19. Please let us know which date is more convenient for you:

- 1) 11-12 May 2018 (Friday/Saturday)
- 2) 8-9 November 2018 (Thursday/Friday)

This is the doodle link: <https://doodle.com/poll/r535wgqk9w2idk7w>

Furthermore, we would like to inform you that parts of the **coordinating team of our working group** have changed. Matthias van Rossum and Jesus Agua de la Roza have left the coordinating team due to other duties, but will of course still stay part of the working group and will be involved in future projects and discussions. To substitute them in their coordinating function, **Jeannine Bischoff (Bonn, Germany) and Johan Lund Heinsen (Aalborg, Denmark)** were coopted into the team. Jeannine is working on indebted peasants in 19th/20th century Tibet and Johan studies Danish convicts in the Atlantic world. We would like to thank Matthias and Jesus for their great efforts and their strong commitment for the group during the past four years. Johan and Jeannine: welcome on board!!

Furthermore, we would like to inform you about some recent publications and upcoming events:

- Stephan Conermann (ed.), *Sklaverei in der Vormoderne. Beispiele aus außereuropäischen Gesellschaften*. (Dhau. Jahrbuch für außereuropäische Geschichte 2), 2017.
- Karl Heinz Roth (ed.), *On the Road to Global Labour History. A Festschrift for Marcel van der Linden*, Brill, 2017.
- Karin Hofmeester/Marcel van der Linden (eds.), *Handbook Global History of Work*, De Gruyter, 2017.
- Christian De Vito/Anne Gerritsen (eds.), *Micro-Spatial Histories of Global Labour*, Palgrave MacMillan 2017.
- Johan Lund Heinsen, *Mutiny in the Danish Atlantic World. Convicts, Sailors and a Dissonant Empire*, Bloomsbury, 2017.
- Judy Fudge/Kendra Strauss (eds.), *Temporary Work, Agencies and Unfree Labour. Insecurity in the New World of Work*, Routledge, 2014.

- 16–18 March 2018: *Rethinking the History of Modern Political Concepts: Race and Division of Labor in Global Western Empires, 1791–1888*. Graduate Conference at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA (CFP, Deadline: December 10, 2017).
- 4–7 April 2018: *European Social Science History Conference (ESSHC)*, Belfast, including over thirty sessions on labour history: <https://esshc.socialhistory.org/esshc-user/programme>
- 19–20 October 2018: *Conference on “Medieval Unfreedoms: Slavery, Servitude, and Trafficking in Humans before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade”* in Binghamton (CFP, Deadline: May 1, 2018).

If you yourself would like to inform the group about recent publications or upcoming events, please let us know so that we can add it to the next newsletter.

Finally, we would like to thank all of you who came to Paris for the lively and fruitful discussion. We are already looking forward to continuing our debate next year in Berlin. Please note that this group stays a group open to new members and is happy to welcome people that have not been part of the discussions and activities so far. So please feel free to join in at any moment!

Best wishes,

Jeannine Bischoff, Christian G. De Vito, Johan Lund Heinsen and Juliane Schiel.