

Newsletter N. 6: Let's get down to business! Our first workshop, 8-9 September in Amsterdam

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

Last week, the **European Social Science History Conference (ESSHC)** took place in Valencia and some of us met and continued our discussion on free and unfree labour relations and a new history of work in a global context. We also had a special session there on "Why and how do shifts in labour relations take place?" gathering five interesting papers on slave labour from the Middle ages to the twentieth century and from the Mediterranean to Africa and the Americas. Maybe one of the most important results that came out of a lively discussion was a remark made by Judith Spicksley: When we think about any form of bondage, we have to spot on the relationship between debt and labour.

Now, after having presented our working group at the Turin conference and at the ESSHC in Valencia, we think that it is time to get down to business and meet for a first and "serious" workshop as working group. We have had a lot of positive feedback for the questions we are addressing, but it has also become clear that we will need to sharpen our conceptual framework and to refine our terminology.

We therefore invite all those who would like to get involved and push our project forward to **meet on 8-9 September for a two days workshop at the International Institute for Social History (IISH) in Amsterdam.**

Based on the paper "Moving Free and Unfree Labour Forward – Notes on Turin 2015" which we circulated with the last newsletter, we suggest the following programme:

Thursday, 8 September:

- 2:00–4:00pm: Conceptual discussion based on the Turin experience (see attached documents: "Moving Free and Unfree Labour Forward – Notes on Turin 2015" and statements to it)
- 4:30–6:00pm: Workshop 1: Autonomy/Heteronomy
- 7:00pm: Evening lecture (by one of us) at the International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE)
- 8:00pm: Dinner

Friday, 9 September:

- 9:00–10:30am: Workshop 2: Degrees (or Moments) of Coercion
- 11:00–12:30am: Workshop 3: Precarity and Control
- 1:00–3:00pm: Lunch

- 3:00–4:30pm: Discussion on the working group's name and joint publication projects (a seminal conceptual article, a special issue in a journal or an anthology)
- 5:00–6:00pm Boat tour by Dienne Hondius or Jennifer Tosch on slavery history and black history along places in Amsterdam ([www.blackheritagetours.com](http://www.blackheritagetours.com))

Our idea is that all participants of the workshop choose one of the three workshop themes (autonomy/heteronomy – degrees/moments of coercion – precarity and control) to give short presentations of their work and foreground the current methodological questions or problems they are dealing with. In your presentations, you may also comment on the research strategies we detected in Turin (contextual, taxonomical and interrelational) or just use one of these approaches to present your research.

Please note: You don't have to write a proper paper. Notes with important points and questions to rise would make it. We think of 10-15 minutes inputs. It's not a conference, but a workshop! An open discussion should take centre stage at the meeting. We really want to use the opportunity of our Amsterdam meeting to enter a joint process of working and thinking together.

We will be housed at the International Institute for Research and Education. Accommodations are very basic there with double bedrooms and shared bathrooms. But we can stay there for **25 EUR per person per night**. If you wish more comfort, that's no problem of course. We would then just ask you to book your own hotel room.

We are very excited about continuing our debates in Amsterdam and hope that many of you can participate. This is a very open meeting. So even if you have not been able to come to Turin or Valencia or to make any contribution to the working group so far, please feel free to join. You may also invite colleagues of yours. In this case, just make sure they fill in the group questionnaire and send it to us as soon as possible.

However, for further planning, **we need your participation confirmed until May, 15**. Please send a short note to: [free.unfree.labour@gmail.com](mailto:free.unfree.labour@gmail.com).

We are looking forward to your reactions,

Best wishes,

Christian G. De Vito, Matthias van Rossum, Jesùs Agua de la Roza and Juliane Schiel.