



WORCK Newsletter N° 2

Aalborg/Vienna, 19 March 2020

Dear members of the COST Action WORCK,
dear colleagues interested in the study of labour and coercion,

it feels very strange to send out a newsletter informing about the activities of an international network these days. The COST Action WORCK, a network of scholars dedicated to the study of labour and coercion in a long-term and global perspective and funded by the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme of the European Union, has grown very quickly since its official start last November. By now, more than 100 colleagues from 33 COST member countries and 8 international partner countries have actively joined the initiative.

Only three weeks ago, the four working groups of the network met for the first time. More than 60 people from 30 different countries came together and exchanged ideas. Today, we are all sitting at home, national borders are being closed, governments are imposing curfews and nobody can tell, when we will be allowed to travel and meet again. In this surrealistic situation of total suspense, we would like to provide you with a short update and share some information with you.

From 27 to 29 February 2020, Claude Chevalyere hosted the first **WORCK Meeting at the ENS de Lyon (France)**. After a first day of plenary discussion, when the four different approaches to the study of labour and coercion were presented by the working group leaders, the participants met in working groups the next day to explore the suggested approaches through their respective fields of research.

Working Group 1 ("Grammars of Coercion"), dedicated to question the analytical categories and labels we use to speak about labour and coercion, discussed the language use and social meaning of historical documents. The diversity of contexts and languages studied by the WG members clearly appeared as a respective strength. The group discussed ways of extracting data on coercion from individual documents and transferring it into a joint database accessible for collaborative work.

Working Group 2 ("Sites and Fields of Coercion") discussed an exploratory paper and the different meanings and potentials of "site" and "field" as analytical concepts. The participants decided that each member should write a small draft paper on how his/her research is connected to sites and fields of coercion.

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Working Group 3 (“(Im)Mobilisations of the Workforce”) discussed four pre-circulated texts focusing particularly on methodological aspects of labour and mobility and developed two guiding questions for collaborative work. First: When is (constrained) mobility doing what, to whom, and when is (constrained) mobility giving what to whom? Second: How did (constrained) mobility of workers impact historical change of labour conditions and regimes?

Working Group 4 (“Intersecting Marginalities”) dedicated its first meeting to a conceptual discussion based on selected readings. First ideas for more focused collective projects were exchanged on intersectionality and coerced war labour, wage labour and state socialism, and intersectionality and reproductive labour.

After the working group meeting, the **Digital Humanities group** presented their plan for a joint publication platform and digital infrastructure allowing for collaborative work on different documents, languages and data sets. Silke Schwandt (Bielefeld) and Tobias Hodel (Bern) will offer special trainings for WG members on annotation, text mining and mapping tools.

On the third day, our **international partners Nicole Ulrich (South Africa) and Supurna Banerjee (India)** shared their observations from the first WORCK Meeting with the group. Their comments were followed by a lively discussion on academic inequalities within Europe, on language use in academia and on how the network can help to promote mutual learning between Eastern and Western European academics. The **Think Tank team**, which led the discussion, will coordinate three initiatives to foster the visibility of non-Anglophone research:

1. The Think Tank team proposes to compile **annotated WORCK Bibliographies** (similar to the Oxford Bibliographies) on specific aspects or approaches to the history of labour and coercion. These annotated bibliographies provide a research guide and help to connect WORCK members from different areas of expertise. If you would like to contribute to the WORCK Bibliographies, please get in touch with Viola Müller (viola.muller@eui.eu), who will provide you with the guidelines for the bibliographical publication.
2. The publication platform developed by the Digital Humanities group shall include **a blog on language and inequality in academia**. If you would like to help to set up such a discussion platform or simply contribute with a text, get in contact with Peter-Paul Bänziger (p.baenziger@unibas.ch).

Finally, the **Public Outreach team** presented first ideas for initiatives and projects reaching a broader public:

1. A **Coffee Table Book and Open Access eBook** shall present the research done by WORCK members in a popular form. Similar to “A History of the World in 100 Objects”, each contributor selects an object that best exemplifies his/her research on labour and coercion and writes a popular text of 1500-2500 words with 5-10 key references. If you are interested in contributing to the project, get in contact with Tereza Kuldova (tkuld@oslomet.no) and send a proposal abstract and a short author bio by 20 April 2020.
2. A **Travel Exhibition** including artistic works, discussion tables, publications and educational tours shall present research topics and results of WORCK members to a broader public and travel to different places in Europe. If you are interested in helping with this exhibition or contributing ideas and material, get in contact with Anamarija Batista (anamarija.batista@wu.ac.at), who will curate the exhibition.
3. A **Throwback Carousel** on the front page of our website shall present a “quote of the day” from a source document we study. If you would like to contribute a short but concise quote from your sources, related to labour and coercion, send a message, including the quote, its English translation and further relevant data (author, date, publication/collection) to Corinna Peres (corinna.peres@univie.ac.at).

Posts for WORCK News on our website (<https://www.worck.eu/news/>), on Twitter (@CoercionsInLabour), Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/WorldsOfRelatedCoercionsinworK/?modal=admin_todo_tour) or Instagram (@worck_k) can be sent to info@worck.eu.

Please note that WORCK offers **Mobility and Collaboration Grants** (“Short Term Scientific Missions”) fostering academic mobility and mutual learning as well as the collaboration on WORCK projects (<https://www.worck.eu/activities/stsm/>). Also, WORCK gives **Conference Grants** for scholars based in a so-called “Inclusiveness Target Country” (<https://www.worck.eu/activities/itc-grant/>).

Let us conclude with a hopeful announcement: Despite the corona pandemic, our preparations for the first WORCK Conference are running at full speed. We have received more than 60 paper proposals from all parts of the world. The conference programme and further details on the registration process and accommodation in Budapest will soon be published on our website.

May you all stay healthy and upbeat!

Johan Heinsen and Juliane Schiel