

3 July 2019

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

At the end of a busy summer term we would like to provide you with some important updates concerning our working group’s activities.

COST Action “Worlds of Related Coercions in Work” (WORCK, CA18205)

First and foremost, we are very happy to inform you that our working group has received a four-year funding for a COST Action entitled “Worlds of Related Coercions in Work” (WORCK). As COST is a funding programme of the EU requiring an equal number of proposers from Eastern and Western Europe and allowing maximum two proposers per country, the development of the proposal was limited to a relatively small group of about 40 people. Now that the proposal is accepted, however, the network can include any researcher, organisation or stakeholder from Europe (and beyond) interested in the COST Action’s objectives.

Based on the continuous exchange we have had in our “free and unfree labour” working group over the last six years, the COST Action seeks to reconceptualize the history of work by transgressing the modern-western analytical categories of “productive/unproductive”, “free/unfree”, “capitalistic/pre-capitalistic” and by investigating dependent labour relations in an epoch- and space-transcending perspective. It brings together hitherto segregated research communities like the study of slavery, serfdom, forced or convict labour and seeks to contribute to current debates on a new social history.

Through regular meetings, a joint digital infrastructure and an over-arching publication strategy the COST Action WORCK is going to discuss bondage and coercion in four closely linked working groups:

Working group 1: “Grammars of Dependency”

Working group 2: “Sites and Fields of Coercion”

Working group 3: “(Im)Mobilisations of the Workforce”

Working group 4: “Intersecting Marginalities”

COST offers new possibilities for our network to deepen existing methodological reflections and broaden our scope by integrating new people, topics and ideas into our discussions. COST will finance working group meetings, workshops, conferences and publications as well as training schools and short-term scientific missions. Also, it fosters the visibility of early career researchers, researchers from Eastern European countries and the Global South as well as the integration of non-academic actors and stakeholders into academic activities.

If you would like to join the COST Action and participate in one or more of the funded activities, you need to get in touch with the national COST coordinator of the country you have scientific affiliation in and ask the coordinator to accept the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of our COST Action (CA18205). After that you may choose among three options:

1. Becoming a Management Committee member (only two delegates and two substitutes are allowed per COST country): you can help to coordinate, implement and

manage the COST Action activities and can potentially take up a leadership position within the network.

2. Becoming a COST participant: you can join one of the working groups, you can attend workshops and training schools, and you may act as trainer in a training school.
3. Becoming a COST grantee: being a COST participant or not, you may spend some time at another research institution of the COST network (“short-term scientific mission”), attend a training school as trainees, or (if you come from an “Inclusiveness Target Country” and are an early career researcher) apply for conference grants.

The 1st Management Committee (MC) meeting will be organised by COST and is going to take place on September 16, 2019, in Brussels. All those you are nominated by their national COST coordinators as MC delegates will receive an official invitation to that meeting within the following weeks. They will then be asked to accept this invitation within 10 days. If you can't attend the meeting, please inform your national COST coordinator, so that your substitute may represent your country at the MC meeting.

If you would like to see the list of countries and delegates that have already joined the COST Action, please consult: <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA18205/#tabs|Name:overview>. Also, you may download the MoU and the COST Action's proposal here.

3rd European Labour History Network Conference (18–21 September, Amsterdam)

Only a few days after the setting up of the COST Action, many of us will meet at the 3rd European Labour History Network Conference, taking place on 18–21 September at the International Institute of Social History (IISH) in Amsterdam. Please consider that the (preliminary) program is now available online: <https://elhn.socialhistoryservices.org/conference/programme?day=83&time=225 sp>.

Also, you may find the program of our working group (with dates and times) here: <https://elhn.socialhistoryservices.org/conference/programme?network=468>.

As quite a few of us will travel directly from the MC meeting in Brussels to the ELHN conference in Amsterdam, Matthias van Rossum was very kind to offer us a seminar room at the IISH for Tuesday, 17 September, in order to get organized for the start of the COST Action and the working group's structure within COST.

On Wednesday, 18 September, however, we will have a regular FreeUnfree working group meeting of four hours (2–6 pm) within the European Labour History Network Conference which will allow us to discuss the entanglements between the FreeUnfree working group and the COST Action, elect new coordinators and develop further plans independently from or beyond the COST Action.

The ELHN conference will then be an excellent opportunity for us to meet old and new members of our group and spend three full days of labour history discussion together with a very rich and promising program. Our group will be present in several different sessions. Also, we are attaching you here a conceptual paper written by Christian De Vito and Johan Lund Heinsen for the double session on “Sites and Fields of Coercion”:

Thursday, 19 September, 9–10:30am

Grammars of Dependency

Chair: Juliane Schiel

Clara Almagro-Vidal: A Polysemic Problem? Words and Contexts of Muslims Working for Military Orders in the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages

Claude Chevalyere: Service and Servility: the Evolution of Two Notions in Late Imperial Chinese Legal Sources

Uiran Gebara da Silva: Free Citizens and Rural Labor Coercion: the Roman Colonate

Undine Ott: People as Potential Commodities in the Medieval Islamicate Mediterranean World (10th to 13th Centuries)

Hayri Göksin Özkoray: Semantics of Labour Relations in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire (15th-17th Centuries)

Thursday, 19 September, 11am–12:30pm

Ambiguous Boundaries: Varieties of Unfree Labour in the Nordic Countries in the Early Modern Period

Chair: Vilhelm Vilhelmsson

Johan Heinsen: On the Run in Eighteenth-century Denmark

Hanne Osthus: Servant or Slave? Black Slaves in Eighteenth-century Denmark-Norway

Peeter Tammisto: Conflict of Interest in Absolutism: the Swedish Crown as Mediator in Nobility-peasant Relations and as Owner of Serfs in Estland and Livland in 1680–1710

Vilhelm Vilhelmsson: Contested Boundaries: Compulsory Service and Casual Labour in Rural Iceland in the Early 19th Century

Thursday, 19 September, 1:45–3:15pm

Free/Unfree Military Labour

Chair: Giulio Ongaro

Otto Aura: Free and Unfree Military Labour in Finnish Fortification Works 1939–44

Jeannine Bischoff: Rewarding a Paid Sword: a 1904 Letter of Honour by the Tibetan Council of Ministers

Christine de Matos: Labour under Military Occupation: Free or Unfree?

Fia Sundevall: Women's Right and Men's Obligation: Gender Equality and Military Conscription in Contemporary Swedish History

Friday, 20 September, 11am–12:30pm

Sites and Fields of Coercion I

Chair: Christian De Vito

Adam Fagbore: The Temple as Site of Coercion in Pharaonic Egypt

Julia Giessler: Coercion in Babylonian Temples (7th – 5th c. B.C.E.)

Lisa Hagelin, Birgitta Leppänen Sjöberg: Constructing Differentiation of Masculinity within the Ancient Household- a Site of Coercion

Arjan Zuiderhoek: Ancient Greek Farms as Sites of Coercion? Free and Unfree Labour in the Ancient Greek Countryside

Friday, 20 September, 1:45-3:15pm

Sites and Fields of Coercion II

Chair: Johan Lund Heinsen

Aleksander Panjek: The Bloody Kiss of Freedom. The Mutiny on a Venetian Galley (1605): Life and Work Conditions of the Rowers

Nicola Pizzolato: Reconceptualising the Factory as Plant-ation: Race, Power and Control in a Detroit Factory

Amal Shahid: Re-‘constructing’ Labour Relations: Coercion in Public Works Construction as Part of Famine Relief in Colonial India c.1870-1914

Veruschka Wagner: Labourers, Beneficiaries, Founders: Slaves involved in Pious Foundations in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire

Friday, 20 September, 5:30–7pm

Round Table: When Reproductive/Subsistence Labour and Coercion Intermingle:

Rethinking the Others of Free Labour

Eloisa Betti: Rethinking precarious work beyond free wage labour Precarity, informality and reproduction in the history of global capitalism

Eileen Boris: Between Free and Unfree Labor: Migrant Domestic Workers and the Employment Agency

Camille Fauroux: Coercion and Reproductive Labour: French Women Workers as Mothers in Berlin (1940-1945)

Oksana Koshulko: Possibility of free labour in cases of female immigrants in Turkey

Maria Tamboukou: Home-based work without home: forced displacement, unfree labour and radical hope

Aliki Vaxevanoglou: Time, Money, Labour, and Family: the Simple Commodity Production System

For your convenience, we are attaching here the session descriptions and paper proposals or our ELHN activities.

Preview 2019–2020

Furthermore, we would like to inform you about some other upcoming events that are related to the topic of our working group and might be of interest for some of you.

- 2-4 October, 2019: Conference of the Asociación Latinoamericana e Ibérica de Historia Social (ALIHS) in Lima, Peru, including sessions on “free and unfree labour” convened by the Red Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajo y Trabajador@s (REDLATT) – MOSTLY IN SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE (contact person: Christian De Vito)
- 6–8 November, 2019: Opening Conference of the Bonn Cluster of Excellence “Beyond Slavery and Freedom” (contact person: Jeannine Bischoff)
- 6-8 February, 2020, Annual Conference of the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies on “Unfreedom” in Arizona, USA (contact person: Hannah Barker)
- 18-21 March, 2020: European Social Science History Conference in Leiden, Belgium
- 26-29 November, 2020: Nordic Labour History Conference in Copenhagen. One track within the conference will specifically be dedicated to “free and unfree labour” (<http://www.nordiclabourhistory.org/call-for-papers-nlhc2020/>).

Have a wonderful summer and hope to see you in September!

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