

24 January 2019

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

We hope you had a relaxing Christmas break and a good start in 2019. Today, we would like to inform you about the results of our meeting last November in Berlin, update you on the 3rd conference of the European Labour History Network, taking place in Amsterdam in September, and invite you to participate in other relevant activities planned for this year.

The **three-day workshop** we had at the International Research Center “**Re:Work**” in Berlin last November took place in collaboration with the ELHN “Military Labour” Working Group and was a very fruitful exchange of about twenty people from all over Europe – and Brazil. The discussion focused mainly on two points:

- (1) **Sites and Fields of Coercion and Autonomy:** The group confirmed the potential of this approach for a more fine-grained analysis of the mechanisms and experiences of domination and dependence. Instead of reflecting on free vs. unfree labour relations in rather abstract terms, this approach calls for a study of labour relations (a) in specific sites of coercion (e.g. plantation, mine, building site, artisanal workshop or factory), and (b) in fields of coercion as a larger set of sites constituted by practices that create and maintain links among each other. The conversation on this point will continue in a double session convened by our working group at the next ELHN conference in Amsterdam (see below). Christian De Vito and Johan Lund Heinsen will draft a conceptual paper further elaborating the approach.
- (2) **Grammars of Dependency:** The group’s discussion was centred around the methodological question of how to think and talk about coercion and bondage in a global and trans-epochal perspective without using the conceptual matrix of the modern West as a starting point. How can we train ourselves in a new analytical language that derives from the empirical study of historical language uses and helps to reconstruct social taxonomies in its historical diversity? Here, it was decided that a small group of volunteers will take the “Gender and Work” database, developed by Maria Agren, as an example and attempt to examine verb phrases expressing coercion and bondage in labour relations.

Besides these conceptual debates, the group decided to explore funding options helping to maintain and intensify the discussions we are having together for almost five years now. So far, we were mostly organising meetings and joint sessions at the big conferences (i.e. “European History and Social Sciences Conference” and “European Labour History Network Conference”), mainly targeting scholars based in Western Europe and working on modern periods. The topic of coercion and bondage, however, calls for a closer exchange with scholars working on earlier periods or on regions not directly linked to the history of the modern West. This is why we invited a number of Eastern European and non-European scholars to join our group, to contribute new issues and to consolidate our scientific network and mutual exchange.

The **3rd conference of the European Labour History Network** will take from **19 to 21 September 2019 in Amsterdam**. The organising committee accepted all session and paper proposals our working group had submitted, which means that this will be a great opportunity to continue our conversation.

The following sessions will be part of the conference's program:

- A double session on "Sites and Fields of Coercion", coordinated by Christian De Vito and Johan Lund Heinsen
- A session on "Grammars of Dependency", coordinated by Juliane Schiel
- A session on "Ambiguous Boundaries: Varieties of Unfree Labour in the Nordic Countries in the Early Modern Period", coordinated by Vilhelm Vilhelmsson
- A joint session on "Labour under Military Occupation: Free or Unfree?", coordinated by the military labour working group
- A round table on "When Reproductive/Subsistence Labour and Coercion Intermingle: Rethinking the Others of Free Labour"
- A group meeting for internal discussion and planning

Besides the ELHN conference, other **events are planned for 2019** that are directly linked to the issues our working group is concerned with.

- 13–14 March 2019: International Conference on "Capture, Bondage, and Forced Relocation in Asia (1400–1900)" in Lyon (contact person: Claude Chévaleyre)
- 4 April 2019: Workshop with Joseph C. Miller on "Slaveries and Slaving Practices in Global Perspective" in Vienna (contact person: Juliane Schiel)
- 17 June 2019: Workshop on "Grammars of Dependency" in Vienna (contact person: Juliane Schiel)
- 17–19 June 2019: Slavery Past, Present and Future. 4th Global Meeting, University of Innsbruck, <https://www.uibk.ac.at/anglistik/conferences/> (contact person: Judith Spicksley)
- 21. June 2019: Giornata di studio «Logistica delle migrazioni tra storia e concetto», University of Milan-Bicocca, convened by SISLAV working group «Lavoro libero e non libero» IN ITALIAN (contact person: Christian De Vito)
- 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)

If you are interested in participating in one or more of these events, just e-mail the contact person.

Finally, we would like to inform you about open calls and recent publications:

- The **Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies** is currently calling for applications for:
 - One (Junior) Research Group Leader for Research Area A “Grammars of Dependency”
 - Two (Junior) Research Group Leaders for Research Area B “Embodied Dependencies”
 - One (Junior) Research Group Leader for Research Area C “Institutions, Norms and Practices”
 - One (Junior) Research Group Leader for Research Area D “Labour and Spatiality”
 - One (Junior) Research Group Leader for Research Area E “Gender and Intersectionality”

Application deadline is 15 March 2019. For further details see: <https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/career/career>

- The **Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies** is currently calling for applications for:
 - Scholarships for Post-Docs and Senior Scholars at the Heinz Heinen Kolleg of the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies

Application details: <https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/pressreleases/scholarships-for-post-docs-and-senior-scholars-at-the-heinz-heinen-kolleg-of-the-bonn-center-for-dependency-and-slavery-studies>

- Just released:
 - Michael Zeuske, *Esclavitud. Una historia de la humanidad*, 2018;
 - Alessandro Stanziani, *Labor on the Fringes of Empire. Voice, Exit and the Law*, 2018;
 - Adrian Grama, *Laboring Along. Industrial Workers and the Making of Postwar Romania*, 2018;
 - Giulia Bonazza, *Abolitionism and the Persistence of Slavery in Italian States, 1750–1850*, Cham 2019.

With all best wishes for 2019!

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