

WORCK

Call for Papers:

WORCK Conference, 16-20 September 2020, CEU Budapest Reconceptualising Wage Labour

The newly started EU COST Action *Worlds of Related Coercions in Work* (WORCK) will host its first annual conference at the Central European University in Budapest from 16-20 September 2020. The network aims at exploring interconnected histories of labour and coercion.

One of the defining features of global labour history has been the insistence on looking beyond wage labour. Much scholarship has therefore been directed towards labour understood to be informal or coercive. From this vantage point, historians have argued that in a global and long-term historical perspective wage labour in a stable labour market was rarely the norm. However, in conceptualising wage labour as an exception, scholars often maintain an analytical distinction between labour relations understood to be coercive, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, wage labour which is implicitly or explicitly understood to be a form of free labour. This conference aims at moving past this binary by exploring the moments and logics of labour coercion within labour relations mediated by remuneration (of all kinds) and/or contracts (of all kinds), including ostensibly free labour. To this end, it also seeks to open up a discussion about whether concepts such as “hired labour” can help historians reconceptualise historical links between wage labour and labour coercion.

The conference organisers are looking for contributions that expose the ambiguities of wage and contract across history. Contributions might address coercion in diverse contexts such as:

- Ancient, medieval or early modern societies
- Peasant economies, urban markets or industrial societies
- Socialist or post-socialist societies
- The global north or the global south
- Contemporary capitalism

We invite proposals that explore labour coercion from a wide range of perspectives including but not limited to those of gender, race and class. We also welcome proposals that explore the linguistic, spatial and temporal dimensions and hierarchies of coercion.

Proposals for papers (max. 300 words) can be sent to worck@worck.eu.

Deadline for proposals: 15 February 2020.

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About WORCK

The COST Action network *Worlds of Related Coercions in Work* (WORCK) calls for a radical change of perspective in labour history. It links the stories of work and production with those of violence, expropriation and marginalisation. By studying the persistence and transformation of coercion across gender orders, geographies and historical eras, WORCK shifts the focus of labour history. Neither the male-breadwinner model nor the free wage labourer or the capitalist mode of production can form the blueprint for this endeavour. Instead, WORCK aims at attaining a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of coercion in all work relations throughout history.

The network bridges the gaps between specialised but hitherto separate subfields and creates an academic space that cuts across standard research fields and enables exchanges between scholars working on topics as various as: construction work in ancient civilisations; indentured work and sharecropping in rural societies; chattel slavery and coolie work; debt bondage, convict labour and military impressment; coercive mechanisms in household work and wage labour; precariousness and modern forms of casualisation.

More information is available at www.worck.eu.