

6th summer school of economic history

August 28-29-30, 2017

Susa (Italy)

WORK ORGANIZATION IN MEDIEVAL AND MODERN PERIODS

The sixth economic history summer school is due to meet in Susa (Piedmont, Italy), on August 28th, 29th and 30th, 2017. Its topic will be entitled “Work organization in medieval and modern periods”. It will enable us to continue and deepen the themes developed over the past few years (the value of things, poverty, common goods, means of payment and quality)¹. While work involves acting on material things, its organization implies a reflection on the property of things, the relationships with time, discipline, control and know-how. On the part of governments, it also requires information that makes it possible to reflect on the state of economic life as well as on all the conflicts endemic to society, to be able to work out legal and practical devices that are necessary for the constitution of a particular knowledge. It also finally questions issues around technical training and the command of various forms of know-how, in contexts that sometimes place some rival systems in a competing situation.

The economic history summer school will be gathering researchers, teachers-researchers, postdoctoral and doctoral researchers of all nationalities. Here is the list of partner institutions: Paris university 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne, EPHE, the University of Toulouse 2 Jean Jaurès, the Archives Nationales (Paris) and the CNRS (national centre for scientific research). Here are the laboratories involved: LAMOP (UMR 8589, Paris 1/CNRS), SAPRAT (EA 4116 EPHE), FRAMESPA (UMR 5136, Toulouse 2/CNRS) and IDHES (UMR 8533 Paris 1/CNRS). This event is financially supported by LabEx HASTEC (History and Anthropology of Knowledge, Techniques and Beliefs) as well as by IGPDE (Institute of public management and of economic development). This event will take place under the auspices of the French Association of economic history (AFHé).

Organizers: Michela Barbot (CNRS, Idhes ENS Cachan), Patrice Baubeau (Univ. Paris Nanterre, Idhes), Marc Bompaire (EPHE, Saprat), Julie Claustre (Univ. Paris 1, Lamop), Anne Conchon (Univ. Paris 1, Idhes), Laurent Feller (Univ. Paris 1, Lamop), Agnès Gramain (Univ. Lorraine, Beta), Emmanuel Huertas (Univ. Toulouse 2/CNRS, Framespa), Rosine Lheureux (Archives Nationales – Paris)

Place and date

Suse (Piedmont, Italy) from 28 till 30 August 2017

¹ About previous sessions, see <http://terrae.univ-tlse2.fr/accueil-terrae/operations/ecoles-d-ete-d-histoire-economique-452786.kjsp?RH=1322144697526>

(Arrival on August 27th in the afternoon – Departure on August 30 or 31st in the morning)

Objectives and nature of the event

The nature of the topic implies, besides mobilizing medievalist and modernist historians, the presence of sociologists specialized in the study of economic life and of economists. The method offered is to get a number of specialists to deliver a series of presentations and to discuss them together. The point is to deepen our knowledge and reflection on these subjects and enable some doctorate students or young doctors to actively contribute to these research works. The presenters' brief is to deliver presentations about their own research and to take part in the debate following presentations.

Themes of the 2017 session

Work organization in medieval and modern periods

Work organization in medieval and modern periods is an issue it is necessary to approach through two different perspectives: the legislation regulating work on one hand, and the firm on the other. Authorities, whether urban or royal or manorial, developed, in the Middle Ages or in modern times, constructed sets of statutes aiming at supervising and organizing production; to set rates, that is to say wages, in practice; to supervise training in trades and the conditions of their practice. A whole section of the reflection on work, therefore, has to be carried out via researching the information that is actually available to the standards-makers and investigating the way they implement them in statutes. In Sienna, for example, in the second half of the 14th century, legislation on agricultural work, agricultural wages, the mezzadri's status (tenant farmers) and their obligations regarding the rural community and their owners is part of the concerns at the core of political life, because what is at stake is nothing less than the ability to support the the propertied classes' incomes and enhance the whole territory, at a time when high wage levels result in farms being abandoned, whether they are tenured or owned by the farmer. Other examples are easily found, where it is the very life of the metropolitan or national districts that the legislators hope to preserve by focusing on work, on the way it is organized and paid for. By acting at this level of human activity, governments also impact the whole society. Their effectiveness is linked to their technical skills, which go far beyond mere empirical knowledge, since it is not only necessary to discern all the movements that impact society but also because it is essential to mobilize all the cultural resources they have. In Sienna, it implies the following: good command of Roman law, of common law, besides perfect knowledge of public institutions and of the procedures which enable them to work.

On the other hand, the work organization has always been linked with the development of the State power. In the 1250s, Étienne Boileau, Louis IX's provost for Paris, sanctioned institutional developments, found in about 100 Parisian trades, which developed without him. In 13th century Italy, the *Arti*, the trade-organizations, exercise power directly in some boroughs, and they believed their political organization had to depend on the political organization found in

their own trade, by taking the place of faulty public institutions.

In short, in medieval times and, to a lesser extent, in modern times, work organization and political organization overlap. Political and economic knowledge and skills intermingle here and they fertilize each other within a typical set of characteristics. In other words, this question allows grasping the whole set of political and cultural problems that are certainly part of economic history; but also go far beyond, since they question the cognitive devices likely to enable both men's production and governance.

Raising the issue of concretely organizing work, also means being directly interested in the concrete functioning of the production activities in small shops or workshops. It also implies approaching the various theoretical and practical sorts of know-how that make it possible to conduct production activities. So, in the 15th century, for example, one of the best steel-mill workers in the Tech valley, one of those whose products are most regularly great quality, also happens to be an apothecary. Though it is impossible to determine whether there is a direct link between the skills required by both aspects of this person's professional life, this is no negligible fact: he has benefited from more than a form of training and his professional competence leans on a bed-rock of abstract knowledge, whose definite contents might well have profited his enterprises. In other words, his qualification by entrepreneurs, the quality of their knowledge and their ability to mobilize some aspects of it plays an important role in the likelihood of developing industrial or commercial activities. Medieval traders' qualifications have for a long time been studied and the mathematical problems they are (or are not) capable of posing pertains to the register of currently ongoing reflections and research works. The relationship between the development of the most sophisticated mathematics and their concrete applications in the building industry has indeed been solved, in part at least, since the studies led by Beaujouan but it still is no less interesting, because it results in considering the work of building from a learned perspective. Similarly, the issue of measuring time, that of introducing clocks on construction sites, of divvying up the working day into fixed time units, like the 20-minute *punti* in 14th century Florence make it necessary to link up several aspects of human work; namely discipline, for example, as well as remuneration according to time rather than piecework or task-oriented activities. Time has become more and more divided up and measured with increasing accuracy, which not only permits simultaneously to measure the amount of remuneration, but also to organize the worker's day in a more and more rational way, by controlling him/her closely and punishing delays or lack of discipline with wage-deductions or fines.

At another level, the matter of workers' skills plays a crucial role. Obviously, it does so as part of production, but also during conflicts, when acknowledging skills plays an important role. The issue of training, i.e. acquiring often tacit forms of knowledge that are nonetheless necessary to practice an occupation plays an essential role here, for two reasons: a workshop cannot work if subordinate tasks have not been performed beforehand. These are done, first and foremost, by apprentices. However, they are also carried out by women, whose role and place should not be minimized owing to this simple fact. The concrete, material, daily organization also occurs via maintaining the workplace and cooking meals. It can also be achieved by financially supporting apprentices, as the master was conferred a father's duties towards them, which confers his wife a nourishing role, a domestic and subordinated part, yet a no less real one. The 'gendered'

organization of the workshop is based on an axiom, namely women’s alleged incompetence, whose “natural” sorts of know-how confine them to unpaid domestic tasks. However, it is possible for a woman to lead the workshop once she has become the owner of it, and numerous examples of it can be found in medieval times. Women’s gradual exclusion from corporate management is one of the important facts of social history, and it will be worth dwelling on that matter later on.

Finally, practical forms of knowledge stand at the core of conflicts and litigations. The example of female spinners is worth quoting. The presence of spinners had always been part of the social and family landscape throughout the Middle Ages and in modern times: one of Boccaccio’s short stories portrays a woman who is to bring back her thread in the city. Another one depicts a spinner’s love affairs with an errand boy who supplies her with crude thread and takes it back once it has been spun. This kind of knowledge suddenly became useless when spinning mills prevailed and became pervasive as of the 18th century, resulting, besides loss of income, in a violent disqualification of some categories of female cottage workers. Such destruction of know-how – made useless because of the emergence of new techniques – stands at the heart of modern times’ conflicts and is intrinsically linked to the industrial revolution. This becomes perfectly clear when factory training competes with the training received in crafts-people’s communities. It became even more obvious when overt uprisings broke out, complete with damage to machines: indeed, machines were dreaded as they were perceived as the chief cause of unemployment.

Sismondi, even before Marx, resented workers’ “disqualification” caused, he believed, by the development of big manufacturing and, as a result, people’s disqualification and dehumanization, as they were confined to purely mechanical functions. Manufacturing work increased workers’ specialization, and this became one of the main arguments against modern industry, on account of its allegedly alienating nature, even more so when that specialization – learnt outside any domestic context – is imposed on children of both sexes and on teenagers. These theoreticians took up again what politicians (Sadler), doctors and philanthropists had been denouncing, and they extended and updated very ancient thoughts on the nature of work and status.

Conflicts also oppose different social groups: power positions are taken over or, rather, positions of political power and of economic domination overlap, resulting in damageable outcomes. During the Middle Ages, work-masters also were the masters of institutions. In the city, they decided on rates and turned claiming better wages into a crime punished by death, as in Douai in 1280s. The political order, the social order and discipline at work intertwine here. In the countryside, finally, the coercive frame of seignury made it difficult the express conflicts; these rather took the form of muted yet stubborn resistance that was almost impossible to detect, except for very rare outbursts of violence, sometimes in protest, besides, against chore modalities and the way a demanding work was requested to be carried out and organized.

Tackling the matter of organizing work as a topic for economic history therefore implies considering it also as a cultural history issue, linked to standards, regulations and conflicts. We therefore suggest reflecting on the following three topics:

1. Standards. How are work regulation standards produced and who sets them?
2. Regulations. Activities are controlled, product quality is certified: how, and through what kind of procedures?
3. Conflicts. Conflicts oppose various types of organization, such as during the industrial revolution. During strikes or urban uprisings, different groups oppose each other.

Doctoral and post-doctoral students' enrollment modalities

Places are available for young researchers in medieval and modern economic history, in economics and sociology: doctoral and post-doctoral students. Working languages are English and French; so, applicants should have at least basic knowledge of both languages (oral expression will be made in the language of their choice).

Students will be requested to make **an oral communication** (with a relation with the day's topic). They are supposed to do it from the presentation of a fund of archives or of a source of economic history that has stood at the core of their doctorate-work.

The organization will cover all expenses: the whole stay as well as travel expenses (return ticket up to €200 euro max).

Due to limited seating availability, applications will be examined by a selection committee.

The application file (written in English or in French) will include:

- . A **detailed** curriculum vitae
- . A **(2-page minimum) presentation of the doctorate-topic, the sources that have been used and the nature of the scheduled oral communication.**

Applications are to be sent before 22 May (answer before 10 June) to Emmanuel Huertas (Univ. Toulouse 2): emmanuel.huertas@univ-tlse2.fr