

Call for Articles

**Productive Bodies. Towards a Body and Material History of the Modern Economic (17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries)**

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on behalf of the Arbeitskreis für Körpergeschichte

The projected peer reviewed edited volume addresses a variety of questions at the intersection of economic, material, and body history. Drawing on new research in these fields, it aims at highlighting the material dimension of economic processes (1) and reassessing the emergence of productive bodies since the 17<sup>th</sup> century (2).

(1) The renaissance of heterodox approaches in economic history over the course of the last two decades has significantly enlarged the scope of this field. This trend mainly benefits from the cultural and social sciences and has fostered research on phenomena that cut across the classic schemes of both labor division (production, distribution, consumption) and the economic spheres (services, industry, and agriculture). For instance, several studies have focused on the history of raw materials and industrial products such as chocolate, dyes, coffee, paper, shoes, cotton, and soy beans, to name only a few. In so doing they have highlighted the analytic potential of these new approaches in economic history. Drawing on new institutional economics, scholars have also analyzed the role that nomenclatures and expectancies of actors have played in the establishment and stabilization of large networks of production, commercialization and consumption. Heuristic concepts such as “quality convention”, developed in French economic history, and innovative approaches emerging from the fields of Science and Technology Studies and history of knowledge stimulate an interest in the material dimension of economic processes that was traditionally banned from economic history. However, the perspectives of body history on productions of all kinds, and especially on the genealogy of the very social and objective relation commonly dubbed “the economic”, are still largely missing in this debate.

(2) Likewise, historians of the body are still reluctant to engage with economic history. Pioneering studies in the 1990s were scarcely followed. This situation is about to change as economic aspects are increasingly integrated into histories of the body. In particular, some scholars have begun to analyze historical regimes of subjectivity. In search of the conditions of possibility of “the economic” these scholars have, amongst other things, explored the (hetero)genesis of the “homo oeconomicus” and self-descriptions of economic subjects. Many such studies have focused on technologies of government and of the self, e.g. the education of monetary subjects, the social production of debts and debtors, and the emergence of the “entrepreneurial self”. Interestingly enough, though, the dimension of corporeality/materiality remains in the shadows. Bodies like that of the calculating subject, for instance – of bankers, traveling salesmen, managers, salespersons – are still waiting for historicization, even if a recent study on the “serving subject” opens interesting perspectives in this regard. Particularly, a history of productive bodies within the industrial regimes that emerged after the threshold of biopolitical modernity of around 1900 remains a desideratum. This also holds true for the case of the agricultural laborer. Likewise, the “post-materialist” or “post-Fordist” working subjects have remained remarkably disembodied, although we know quite well how bodies are used to optimize and regenerate the “resources” of these subjects – via techniques of the self like “body therapy”, “wellness”, “self healing”, and the like.

The projected volume draws on both agendas and highlights the body in its intrinsic relations with “the economic”. Contributions shall thus focus on the corporeal and/or material dimension of the production of the economic, particularly in the following fields:

a) While the model of the “human motor”, borrowed from thermodynamics, was crucial for the constitution of productive bodies at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, new findings suggest its irrelevance for present regimes of production and cultures of the self. It is unlikely, however, that this model was directly and thoroughly replaced by new ones. In this regard, we are looking for contributions focusing on transformations of the “human motor”, on transitions between hegemonic subjectivities of the “carbon” and the “silicon age” (Gilles Deleuze), as well as on simultaneously emerging concepts of productive bodies.

b) Relatively little research has hitherto been done with respect to historical aspects of the corporeal/material production of “the economic” itself, e.g. the production and selection of “economically relevant/irrelevant” bodies. Contributions which address these issues by crossing the classic scheme of economic liberalism (production, distribution, consumption) are thus highly welcomed. We especially invite scholars from the fields of dis/ability, gender, post-colonial and queer history, and from the history of forced labor, who are willing to explore the entanglements and exclusions by which economic/productive bodies are constituted.

c) The discussion on whether only human bodies can become productive bodies is to be (re-)opened as well. Obviously, working subjects are hardly separable from their tools and means of production – ranging from a simple hammer to the “cube farm”. We therefore invite scholars who address, from a historical perspective, the question of the human/non-human nature of productivity by analyzing “productive objects” or “bio-assemblages” (e.g. plants, animals, machines, production sites, robots and computers, as well as pencils, desks and prostheses, to name but a few possible objects) and their influences on the constitution of specifically human productive bodies.

d) Finally, the constitution of productive bodies and economic productivity accompanied the emergence of industrial regimes of workforce organization as well as the establishment and integration of markets, well before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Little is known so far, for instance, about the prehistory of the thermodynamic model that was most prominent at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We therefore welcome contributions addressing the above listed issues and questions from a “longue duree” perspective, especially those focusing on the “Sattelzeit” of the decades around 1800 and/or the pre-modern era.

Proposals should include an abstract of about 500 words and a short biographical note. Please send proposals to Arina Heussler (arina.heussler@unibas.ch) no later than June 30, 2014. Notification of acceptance of proposals will be given by July 31. The full papers are to be submitted by January 31, 2015. Acceptance is based on a double-blind peer review process and will be communicated by March 31, 2015. Publication is scheduled Fall/Winter 2015.