

## Editorial

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The concept of work has been a key topic in both history and sociology since the early days of these disciplines. Up to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the sociology of work, as well as social history and the history of labor, analyzed work within the framework of the nation-state and national institutional settings. During the last decade, however, it has become clear that this perspective is too narrow. Therefore, the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology (BGHS) dedicated its 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Seminar in 2013 to the topic of »Work in a Globalizing World.«

Four of this issue's five articles originated from papers put to discussion at this Annual Seminar, which explored the many contemporary and historical facets of »Work in a Globalizing World: Gender, Mobility, Markets.« The doctoral conference charted much new territory, with numerous presentations of dissertation and postdoctoral projects.

First of all, work as a transregional phenomenon, gender, migration, and emerging markets appeared in most projects as an intricate entanglement that can only be understood properly in its manifestations across space and time. Thus, whereas it appears inadequate to speak of a truly »globalizing« labor market, one can find regional labor market and labor migration regimes all over the world. These are perhaps not global, but cover transnational and even transcontinental distances, and very often have a considerable history dating back to colonial and even pre-colonial times. Second, labor migration nowadays seems to be a phenomenon found predominantly at the highest and at the lowest occupational levels. At the high level of experts and executives, processes of relocation are not symptoms of an emerging new global labor market, since their deployment in foreign countries is frequently temporary, often part of an intra-firm qualification process, and represents a pattern of delegation

rather than competition for employment. A »global management elite,« ready to take on jobs wherever an opening materializes around the globe, is still a fiction. At the other end of the employment hierarchy, the role of institutionalized labor migration, often bordering on forced migration, has been emphasized in multiple projects. Here the role of professional agencies as intermediaries seems to have been and be especially important. From an historical perspective, junctures and, not rarely, continuities with varying forms of unfree labor are of special interest. This, finally, leads to the continuing importance of the gendering of work. The enduring inequality which separates male and female labor, and is also made responsible for different levels of push to migrate, seems to have its historical roots in the tradition of considering female labor not as work proper, but as some temporary extension of domesticity. The interface with discourses on forms of unfree labor, also not recognized as work but as extensions of servitude, are obvious. All three aspects can lead us towards a deeper understanding of the history of and of current trends of capitalism.

The five contributions to this issue of *InterDisciplines* provide glimpses into the abovementioned fields of debate which made the Annual Seminar of 2013 so lively and productive.

**Philipp Reick** explores the struggle for a shorter workday for women in the 1860s and 1870s in Germany. Taking Karl Polanyi's concept of »fictitious commodities« as his theoretical starting point, Reick juxtaposes discourses that oppose the thorough commodification of male labor on the one side and demand the limitation of working hours for women on the other. He demonstrates that both discourses followed diverging trajectories. While demands aimed at the improved status of male labor argued with the necessity to defend political citizenship and economic and social rights, debates on female wage labor fell back on either traditional paternalistic ideas of women's role in family care and reproduction or transported concerns about unfair competition from cheap female labor, which additionally seemed to threaten the status of males. Applying Nancy Fraser's concept of recognition, Reick concludes

that early social democrats and social reformers did not promote emancipation, but in fact challenged the participation of women in the labor market as such.

The invisibility of women's paid work in the informal labor sector is the topic of **Funda Ustek's** contribution. Starting from the observation that official data on the labor force often underestimates women's participation in the labor market, Ustek presents results from her field work in Istanbul, Turkey, where she asked women working in the informal sector about their concept of work. Her analysis shows that these women often conceptualize themselves as »not working« because their work is badly paid and resembles the unpaid household work they are used to doing at home. They only start realizing that what they do is »work« when they meet others in the same situation. Conceptualizing work as a social construct, Ustek is able to show that concepts of gendered work and informality are tightly interwoven. This leads to a disregard of women's labor in the informal sector. It is considered non-work not only by the women themselves, but also by official statistics and thus by the society as a whole.

The intersection of gendered power relations, labor markets, and mobility is addressed by **Paula Pustulka**, who conducted qualitative interviews with Polish women who migrated to Germany or the United Kingdom some years ago. In contrast to other findings, which identify economic reasons as the main push to migration, Pustulka finds that women still face a high degree of labor market discrimination in Poland. This motivates migration in search of more gender equality and self-determination. Thus job satisfaction in the host countries is surprisingly high, although women regularly have to take on work beneath their formal educational level. She advocates a research perspective on labor mobility that both takes into account both the socially unequal positions occupied by women and men in the labor market, and allows scrutiny of the impact of mobility on enhancing the agency and subjective achievements of women.

**Heidi Bludau's** contribution leads to a change of perspective, away from individual motives for mobility and towards the creation of a transnational labor chain by for-profit recruitment firms in healthcare in the Czech Republic. Bludau conducted ethnographic research at two Czech recruitment firms in Prague that are establishing a healthcare labor chain to Middle Eastern countries, especially Saudi Arabia. Analyzing the impact of the recruiters on migration processes, she identifies three steps: At the first step, recruiters create the labor chain by establishing relations between their own country and the partner country on the economic as well as the cultural level. Second, they have to instill the wish to join this chain in potential workers, in this case nurses. And finally, they have to implement structures to facilitate the flow of migrant workers. In her conclusion, Bludau shows that migration processes do not follow a random pattern, but are often purposefully shaped by institutions such as recruitment firms. In this case, they are able to benefit from specific human capital that is available in abundance in one country while in scarce supply in another.

**Edgar Burns** did not participate in the BGHS Annual Seminar in 2013. And his article seems perhaps misplaced in this issue, as it does not focus on the interplay of gender, mobility, and markets. Yet he provides a highly welcome and thorough analysis on the development of the veterinarian profession in six Anglo-American settler societies in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, providing insight into the roles governments have played and still play in processes of professionalization. Taking Harold L. Wilensky's functionalist approach towards the sociology of professions as his point of departure, Burns, by comparing historical veterinary professionalization processes in the UK, US, Canada, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand, is able to show the different courses the profession took regarding its development as a full-time occupation, its professional training and its professional associations in different settler nations. His case study counters harmful biases the almost hegemonic functionalist approach has imposed on analyses of professions in general by both neglecting the discipline's own historical and geographical situatedness in the US of the 1970s and claiming to be a Universalist

approach. Taking a comparative perspective, Burns concludes that the case of the Anglo-Saxon veterinary professionalization can best be explained as an interplay of »globalized information networks« which changed in their interaction among settler nations.

In sum, the articles assembled in this special issue of *InterDisciplines* deliver innovative perspectives on and fresh, empirically grounded insights into historic and newly emerging structural features of »work in a globalizing world.«