

CFP: Science at Work. How Academics and Other Specialists Contributed to the Normalization of Work (late 19th and first half of the 20th century)

Vienna, September 9th to 11th, 2013

Deadline: January 7th, 2013

The Production of Work
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The workshop will investigate how science and/or scholarship (in the broadest sense) from late 19th to the first half of the 20th century contributed to the historical production of work.

Work has fundamentally changed since the late 19th century. Emerging welfare states not only started to intervene more systematically in labour relations but also to bring forward new social facts. Overall, work was increasingly normalized as regular – at best skillful – gainful employment. It took place in national (instead of just occupational) labour markets and was complemented by new kinds of legitimate non-work (unemployment, illness, childhood, leisure time etc). This new work allowed for a new system of entitlements, thus laying the foundations of welfare states. The history of this normalization is the history of varied and omnipresent struggles over how work should be – and how it should be valued.

These struggles cannot be understood without accounting for the “scientification of the social” (Lutz Raphael) or of society in general. On the one hand, successfully defining and imposing what could (or could not) pass for work and how work should be organized became linked to the successful use of sciences, i.e. of arguments, proofs, observations, titles etc. effectively acknowledged as scientific. On the other hand, any attempt to participate legitimately in such struggles could no longer do without *Wissenschaftlichkeit*, i.e. making credible reference to science and/or scholarship. For instance,

- the organization of national labour markets and the official measurement of unemployment were made possible by uses of statistics;
- mathematics offered the tools for inventing nationwide systems of social insurance;
- psychology developed tests to assess and measure talent, abilities, intelligence and other (similarly constructed) aspects of personality that were deployed by the new vocational counseling;
- medicine was assigned the expertise to determine who was physiologically capable to work (healthy, ill, or an invalid);
- labour law developed terms of reference for workplaces and for the inspection of labour regulations;
- productivity began to be organized by means of scientific measurements of human movements (time and motion studies);
- political organizations drew upon the social sciences to confirm their positions (e.g. the famous Marienthal Study);
- and several other disciplines (like anthropology, pedagogy, national economics, tax law) were involved in defining work.

The sciences of labour did not only strive to examine or describe work but also aimed to form and reform – thereby producing – it. They strived and (in part) succeeded at bringing into existence “things that hold” (Alain Desrosières). They played a role in the production of work by including or neglecting certain activities in their observations, thereby defining the boundaries of

what could (or could not) legitimately pass as work. They fundamentally contributed to the production of work from the late 19th century on.

The uses made of science and/or scholarship in the production of work were manifold. They differed greatly, according to: the theories, methods, and data used; the disciplines and the areas of research; the representations of science and/or scholarship; the facts constructed; and so on. Some uses made reference to academic neutrality; others to applied management, engineering and applied science.

The sciences of work can therefore not be reduced to knowledge but instead were a spectrum of practices. Accordingly, those who developed and deployed sciences of work ranged from practitioners in various fields to academic researchers, to specialists of all kinds of subjects and affiliations in between. Experts became especially important. From the late 19th century on, they emerged as producers of solutions to concrete problems while at the same time drawing on scientific knowledge. Of particular interest to this workshop are the questions of who made claims to having expertise on work and/or non-work as well as how and when decision makers (politicians, governments etc.) referred to work-related expertise.

We welcome contributions that approach case studies of sciences of work as practices of non-specialists as well as specialists like experts and/or researchers/scholars in an academic context as well as those in public administration, private enterprises, trade unions and work situations. We especially appreciate studies that compare genders, periods, places, academic disciplines, (public and private) policies, and so on.

Papers should address a few of the following questions:

- Which activities were produced as work by science – and which as non-work?
- How were the uses of science organized in practice in order to produce work?
- Who was engaged in the development of new scientific fields and issues concerning work and who was not?
- How (and when) could a preoccupation with problems of work render someone a specialist, an expert or even a scholar and/or scientist?
- How were relations to academic and non-academic fields established, handled and maintained?
- In what ways (e.g. using theories, methods, data) did specialists attempt to assert the scientific and/or scholarly soundness of their activities? Was their audience composed of scientists and/or scholars or of non-scientists and/or non-scholars?

This workshop is organised by the ERC-starting grant project “The Production of Work: Welfare, Labour-Market, and the Disputed Boundaries of Labour (1880-1938)”, directed by Sigrid Wadauer. For more information on the project, see the homepage <http://pow.univie.ac.at>.

The project will cover travelling expenses and accommodations for invited participants.

Abstracts not exceeding 1 page and a short CV should be submitted to pow.wiso@univie.ac.at.