



**Call for Papers:
Forced and coerced labour: comparing colonial spaces and global conflicts.
Brussels, 19 March 2015.**

Scholars from diverse fields have often pointed to the interconnectedness of European continental experiences in the age of ‘Total War’ (1870-1945) and the practices implemented under colonial rule. Potential parallels range from escalating cultures of violence (planned programmes of ethnic cleansing, new types of industrialized warfare), centralist state exploitation of economic sectors, the blurring of lines between the military and the civil spheres, and the implementation of racist and supremacist ideas in the guise of imperialist agendas. As such, one could argue that the exact relation of total war within the development of 20th century European modernity cannot fully be understood without taking the colonial theatres into account. However, concrete comparative research applying more theoretical assumptions to concrete cases is still lacking. This workshop aims to provide just that, using the concrete angle of forced labour.

The purpose of this workshop is to compare various forms of wartime labour (1918-1940 and 1930-1945) with similar experiences in colonial peripheries, in order to highlight possible circulations, exchanges or transpositions of practices and policies inside or between empires.

War, and certainly the iconic total wars of the 20th century, has always been central to European labour history. The shift from peace to wartime economy brought about a state induced intensification of productivity in all sectors as well as a reorientation of industrial production, a fundamental disruption of class relations and the existing social order (for example the worker-employer relationship), a mobilisation of alternative employment pools to compensate the mass departures of conscripts to the front, etc. In such a period of ‘abnormality’, a massive, disciplined and flexible workforce proved a key element to victory. The dogma of total war often necessitated the use of coercive recruitment and subsequent management methods in order to ensure a constant and high economic productivity.

Meanwhile, the adaptation of African or Asian spaces to the imperatives of colonial validation- industrialisation, the extraction of raw material, the creation of large-scale plantations,... - showed the same developments, namely the necessity to mobilise a large and disciplined native workforce. These practices, which started as early as the second half of the 19th century, might have influenced ideas, policies, and practices of forced employment strategies later used within the European continent during the two world wars. Multiple and sometimes connected techniques of forced labour therefore became part of a global system.

With forced labour as our topic, this workshop wants to stimulate the dialogue between researchers working in different fields and areas, in order to highlight possible exchanges and connections between research agendas dealing with both colonial and wartime labour practices,

in order to investigate the interconnectedness between workers' management and recruitment practices in 19th century imperial expansionist systems in relation to the two world wars.

Three major themes of research will be followed:

- Panel 1 : *Workforce mobilisation*: which social groups are the targets of recruitment? Which recruitment methods are being used? Does a legislative framework encompass practices of emergency or coerced recruitment? What are the effective means of recruitment, and what kind of actors are in charge of enforcing them? Are public and private agents effectively collaborating in practices of workforce mobilisation?
- Panel 2 : *Mobility and infrastructures*: According to specific needs and imperatives, are there practices of massive displacement of workers? How is the daily life of workers organised? Is the building of *ad hoc* infrastructures – workers camps or villages necessary? How are the basic needs of the workforce – food, hygiene, medical care – being taken care of?
- Panel 3: *Resisting labour*: Are workers developing strategies of individual or collective resistance against labour and recruitment? Are they passive or violent? ... or organised? Are they linked to organised movements; political parties, trade unions, religious communities,....?

Date: 19 March 2015

Place: Cegesoma (Centre for historical research and documentation on war and contemporary society) Square de l'Aviation 29 - 1070 Brussels

Instructions for panellists:

Candidates should send a paper proposition (up to 2500 signs), at coercedlabourconference2015@gmail.com before 30 November 2014. They should specify the panel for which they consider their contribution to be the more relevant, and add a few keywords (between three and five) that best summarize their fields of study. All propositions will be answered on 19 December 2014. Lunch and drinks will be offered to all participants, but unfortunately the organizers cannot cover travel expenses.

In order to ensure optimal exchanges between participants, as well a thorough reflection on colonial and wartime comparisons, presenters are invited to send a draft of their communications before 6 February 2015. Selected papers might be considered for publication.

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