

Call for Papers

“Rémunérations et autorités politiques, XVe-XXIe siècle” /

“Forms of remunerations and public authorities, XV-XXI centuries”

International symposium, organised by the ELHN working group *Remuneration, workers and employers organisations: bargaining and struggle in the longue durée*

Université Gustave Eiffel, Champs-sur-Marne, France

[\(https://www.univ-gustave-eiffel.fr/\)](https://www.univ-gustave-eiffel.fr/)

22-23 janvier 2020

Proposals of max 500 words must include name, contact details and affiliation (if any) of the applicant and should be sent by **25 July 2020: remuneration.elhn@gmail.com**

Limited amount of funds are available for travel expenses.

Organising Committee

Stefano Bellucci (Leiden)

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Corine Maitte (ACP-UGE)

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The working group on *Remuneration and Bargaining* is one of the research clusters of the European Labour History Network (ELHN). The working group exists since the formation of the ELHN in 2013, and from within it, thanks to a series of activities, a seminal work of labour history was produced (in French): Michel Pigenet, Michel Margairaz (sous la direction de), *Le prix du travail. France et espaces coloniaux, XIXe-XXIe siècle*, Paris, PUS, 2019. The objective of the working group on Remuneration and Bargaining is the analysis of the various forms of remuneration in the long term, and in their different social and economic contexts. The group rejects the teleological view that presupposes a linear evolution from certain forms of remuneration to other forms. On the contrary, numerous forms of remuneration, which are temporally and spatially a part from one another, more than often, present similarities and entanglements.

During the last ELHN conference (Amsterdam, 19-21 September 2019), the working group expanded historical perspective as to include contemporary history, and it enlarged its geographic scope as to go beyond the francophone world. Some papers presented in the

working group's sessions are already under consideration for publication. To enrich the debate, the working group decided to organise an international symposium on a particular theme that emerged during the discussions in Amsterdam: "**Forms of remunerations and public authorities, XV-XXI centuries**".

Remuneration in the public sector seems to have been studied primarily during the XX century; at the conference in Amsterdam, a few papers touched on this issue – on China, India, and Iran in particular. It seems therefore interesting to enlarge the discussion to other geographic areas and to the *longue durée*. In addition, remuneration is usually studied within the realm of the private sector, while more research is needed on the public sector both as employer as well as regulator beyond the contemporary times. Public authority (polity) is rather general concept and therefore it is inclusive. It allows to put together the contemporary with antiquity, the "state" with international organisations, the urban with the rural. The concept of public authority also allows us to include in it "states" in medieval and modern times, empires, municipal authorities, city-states, and so on.

Three major subjects of research have been identified:

1) **Public authorities' intervention in remuneration.** In which way do public authorities interfere on remuneration? Minimum salaries or living wages are a reality in some European countries since after the Second World War. This is an example of public intervention in the fixation of salaries. The XX century however is not the inventor of public authorities' intervention in the fixing of salaries, but in the past, it seems that public authorities were more interested in fixing caps to maximum salaries rather than or other than establishing minimum salaries. As much as this is true in many European realities since the XIV century (the Black Plague), research on this subject is still far from being exhaustive and the justification for these public measures require further analysis. This is only an example to illustrate the importance of comparative historical analysis. We encourage proposals that also explore the issue of different forms of public intervention on the fixation of remuneration from a global perspective (non-Eurocentric) and without any limitation regarding time (from antiquity to medieval to contemporary times).

2) A second theme concerns **the specificity of remunerations and salaries given to state employees and officials by public authorities themselves at different levels:** from local administrative units to states; from the imperial bureaucracy to international organisations. Which are the specificities of these kind of remunerations? Political history has studied in depth the bureaucratisation processes of European monarchies, which would have led to the development of offices staffed with proto-state official. However, the history of their remunerations is partly there still to be written. To complicate matters, there are also *sui generis* issues – such as, for example, in France, the hereditary nature of these posts – in the relationship of public authority with its "servants", for example in monarchical settings. Furthermore, the processes of bureaucratisation have been criticised by those historians who insisted on the *longue durée* view, and point out to the domestic nature of labour relations between high state authorities (ministries) and their dependants or families – such as for example in France between the XVII and XVIII centuries. Again, remuneration forms of public servants can vary significantly, and it can go from the salary proper to other kind of rewards.

Another important issue is, of course, **the relationship between the private and the public sector.** Which levels of remuneration do exist in these two realms? How does the public sector manage to attract its needed labour force? How does the public authority keep at its

service its labour force? When and why does the idea of public service “career” develop (with connected scales of remuneration)? When and how did years of service and remunerations became associated in the public sector? What is the relationship between recruitment and remuneration in the public sector? What are the advantages of the public sector versus the private sector? How does remuneration relate to coercion and punishment for public workers/servants? Where there other advantages, other than the remuneration itself, for public employees? Which kind of welfare measures and pensions existed for public servants? How did they emerge? Does the public authority offer advantages and assurances, for example in terms of stability and regularity of salary payments that the private sector does not? A key issue for the understanding the worlds of remuneration is indeed the modality of payment. In the XX century until today, we tend to think of the state and public authorities as guarantors of wage stability and certitude, at least for their officials. But where does this confidence come from? Where are, if any, contradicting realities (some failed states of contemporary Africa for example)? Which are the foundations of these certainties?

3) A third theme concerns the relationship between remunerations given by the public authorities and those paid by private companies or entrepreneurs as well as the **different forms of conflict** that this relationship can create. A part from competition, complementarity can also exist between the state authorities and private entrepreneurs when it comes to the prise en charge of the labour force’s wages. Is this what makes remuneration in the public sector weaker or stronger? Is there a transfer of workers from one sector to the other and if so what are the determining factors? What the political and ethical rules of these transfers public-private? Quite important is the degree of social conflict about remunerations. Studies on wages showed how one characteristic of conflict about remuneration has often been the divergence of payments and issues relating to the severance pay (for example in the construction of public buildings). Conflicts are potentially numerous and their reasons range from issues of compensation per se to debt incurred by workers during their time at work. While studies exist on wage conflicts in the private sector, more needs to be done with respect to the public sector especially in the *longue durée*. In a social conflict situation, was the public *modus operandi* the same as in the private sector? What role did legal courts play? Were there informal mechanisms of conflict resolution in place to solve struggles over remunerations?