

Abstracts

Angiolina Arru, "Donating Does Not Mean Losing". Loans, Donations and the Advantages of Reciprocity in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Rome

Donations are very interesting sources (underestimated by historians) for understanding the importance of an estate for both women and men. The cautions and the rules imposed by the statutes on donations allow us to examine the sources under a new light and improve our understanding of the female concept in relation to property, and the space offered by the laws regulating patrimony dynamics from the ancien régime to the present. In donations we see an even sharper contrast (compared to other acts of transmission of goods) in women's choices with respect to those of men. This contrast has nothing to do with the desire for a more egalitarian distribution of wealth (as some studies on wills have shown). It is interesting to analyze the different interpretations – of women and men – regarding reciprocity and exchange criteria, and the choice of donors. It is no accident that recipients of donations from women were almost always men. This was one way of confirming the rationale of the dowry. As the cases under examination show, men were forced to take this rationale into very careful consideration.

Andrea Birbaumer and Ina Wagner, Telecommuting in Context: Boundaries, Barriers, and Fluent Transitions

Drawing from studies of telecommuting as social practice, this paper makes use of the notions of space, time and gender in discussing boundaries and transitions between the office and the home as work places. The fieldwork results question the widespread belief that the spatial makes fluent transitions between both spheres easier. It shows that women have to spend considerable effort in establishing and maintaining the boundaries between work and family responsibilities, in coping with temporal conflicts, and in getting access to the informal support structure of a shared rich office environment. Instead of 'privatizing' these efforts, initiatives for developing a support environment need to be taken.

Stefan Gorißen, The Protoindustrial Household as a Place of Production. The Ravensberg Fine-Linen Production in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

Theories on protoindustrialisation, focussing on Early Modern industry in rural regions, postulate that the economic and social change between the Thirty Years War and the middle of the nineteenth century had far reaching consequences on demographic behaviour and household size and structure. Changing household patterns with the emerging of new economic opportunities were also supposed to have caused changes on the relations between men and women, and on gender roles. In the past twenty years a lot of research has been done in investigating the demographic structures of several protoindustrial societies, but up to now there are – concerning the territories of the Holy Empire – only very few case-studies, which examine the effects of growing protoindustrial trades on household structures. The essay tests the assumptions of the theories on protoindustrialisation by discussing the household structures in Spenge, a town in the "linenregion" of Ravensberg/Westphalia. The results of these casestudies are also compared with the outcomings of some other studies on protoindustrial societies in Germany.

Karin Hausen, Realities of Perception. Critical Comments on the Sources of Nineteen Twenties Studies on Homework in Germany

This essay experiments with the question, in how far advanced theoretical-methodological debates on poststructuralism, linguistic turn, and new cultural history have influenced empirical historical studies in practice. I have chosen one passage each of three 1920-ies studies on homework in Germany and suggest interpretations on them as well as a classification within the context of the discourse on social policy with regard to homework at the turn of the century. Homework as a subject of empirical research is particularly revealing in connection with theoretical-methodological questions. This is due to the fact that the 1920-ies approach of the social sciences as well as of social policy – and therefore also the subsequent historiographical approach – to the subject of homework opened up a field of discourse in between work and the family, on the basis of which the controversial cohesion of these two factors could be discussed. In times of antagonistically defined boundaries on class and gender, the topic of homework simplified attempts to come up with the positive and negative interpretations of a precarious social context in a comparatively conflict-free way and based on a broad consensus, to reach an understanding on desirable family- and gender relations, and to confirm them.

Eva Schöck-Quinteros, Protecting Homework for “the mothers of the working people”. Germany 1896–1914

After the 1896 strike in Berlin's garment industry, homework became a permanent subject of the social and political debates in Imperial Germany. A main topic in this discussion was the question whether the state should regulate homework and, if yes, how this should be implemented in practice. It was widely agreed that the best means to protect homework was to guarantee minimum wages, since legislation concerning working conditions could not be effectively controlled and would turn into a disadvantage for the homeworkers. The close relationship between the social reform and the women's movement in general and with regard to homework in particular has not been a matter of historical research until recently. It is the intention of this essay to show the participation of women of Christian-Social background as well as the women's movement generally in the debate about homework. Around 1900 an active women's network with a leading role in this discussion had been developed. These women supported the maintenance and regulation of homework in order to provide work opportunities for the “mothers of the working people”.

Claudia Thalmayer, Displacements. Homework in the Globalized Textiles and Clothing Industries – an ILO Documentation

This study, which was published in 1996 by the ILO (International Labour Organization), documents working conditions in the international textiles and clothing industries and points to global economic interdependencies and trends in this branch of industry. Today homework has been integrated to a large extent into world-market production, but is still situated at the very bottom of the pyramid-like production structure of subcontracting. While homework is a regular – though with regard to the textiles and clothing industries steadily declining – form of work in the industrial countries, it is mainly informally organized in developing countries, as a result of which homeworkers are not covered by labour legislation. Therefore, homeworkers are faced with precarious working conditions: They depend on intermediaries, have little room for wage negotiations, work long hours and yet earn less than factory workers. Homeworking women earn significantly less than their male counterparts, as is documented by several national studies. However, there is a considerable lack of internationally comparable data with regard to female-male trends in the development of homework.