Insecurity in the Age of Labour Formalisation: Informal Work in Europe, ca. 1870–1970

International Conference, University of Bern, Switzerland, 31 August – 2 September 2023

Location: Room S 201, UniS, Schanzeneckstrasse 1, 3012 Bern

Organisers: Sibylle Marti (Bern), Christof Dejung (Bern), Susan Carin Zimmermann (Vienna)

Thursday, 31 August

12:00 Welcome Lunch at Room S 201, UniS, Schanzeneckstrasse 1, 3012 Bern

13:00 Introduction: Sibylle Marti (Bern), Christof Dejung (Bern), Susan Carin Zimmermann (Vienna)

13:30 Panel 1: Informal Work in Rural Areas

Chair  Juri Auderset (Bern)

Corinne Geering (Leipzig): When the State Arrived in the Rural Workshop: Home Industries in Austria-Hungary during the Age of Reforms

Jessica Richter (St. Pölten): Distinguishing Workers, Establishing Hierarchies: Categorizing Farm and other Workers in Disputes over Social Rights (Austria, 1920–1938)


15:45 Coffee Break
16:15  Panel 2: Women’s Home-Based Informal Work

Chair  Susan Carin Zimmermann (Vienna)

Leda Papastefanaki (Ioannina): “Industrious Women…” Women’s Informal Labour at Home in Athens and Piraeus (ca. 1890-1940)

Elisabeth Luif (Vienna/Budapest): Women’s “Return” to the Household? Home-Based Work in 1930s Austria

17:45  Reception

18:15  Keynote

Eileen Boris (Santa Barbara): The Gender of Informality: Intimate Labors in Transnational Perspective

20:00  Dinner at Restaurant Waldheim, Waldheimstrasse 40, 3012 Bern

Friday, 1 September

9:00  Panel 3: Work Between Formal and Informal Relations

Chair  Agnes Gehbald (Bern)

Sigrid Wadauer (Vienna): Ambivalences of (In)formality

David Cowan (Cambridge): Labour Informality and Waiters in Early-Twentieth-Century Britain
10:30 Coffee Break

Aliki Vaxevanoglou (Athens): Social Relations, Family, and Informal Work in 20th Century Greece

12:00 Lunch at Restaurant Grosse Schanze, Parkterrasse 10, 3012 Bern

14:00 Panel 4: Informal Work in Dictatorships

Chair Christof Dejung (Bern)


15:30 Coffee Break

16:00 Panel 5: Informal Work during the Boom

Chair Sibylle Marti (Bern)

Anna Elisabeth Keim (Halle-Wittenberg): Children of the Sixties: Exploring Contract and Temporary Work in the Federal Republic during the Boom

17:00 Optional Group Activity in the Old City of Bern (UNESCO World Heritage)

20:00 Dinner at Restaurant Lorenzini, Hotelgasse 10, 3011 Bern
Saturday, 2 September

9:00  Panel 6: Informal Work in Socialist Countries

Chair  Susan Carin Zimmermann (Vienna)

Adrian Grama (Regensburg): Original Dualisms: Labour Law and Casual Work in Portugal and Romania (1920s-1960s)

Kateryna Burkush (Berlin): Informality and Seasonal Work in Narrated Biographies of Women from Soviet Transcarpathia (1950s–1980s)

10:30  Coffee Break

11:00  Concluding Discussion

12:00  Farewell Lunch at Room S 201, UniS, Schanzeneckstrasse 1, 3012 Bern