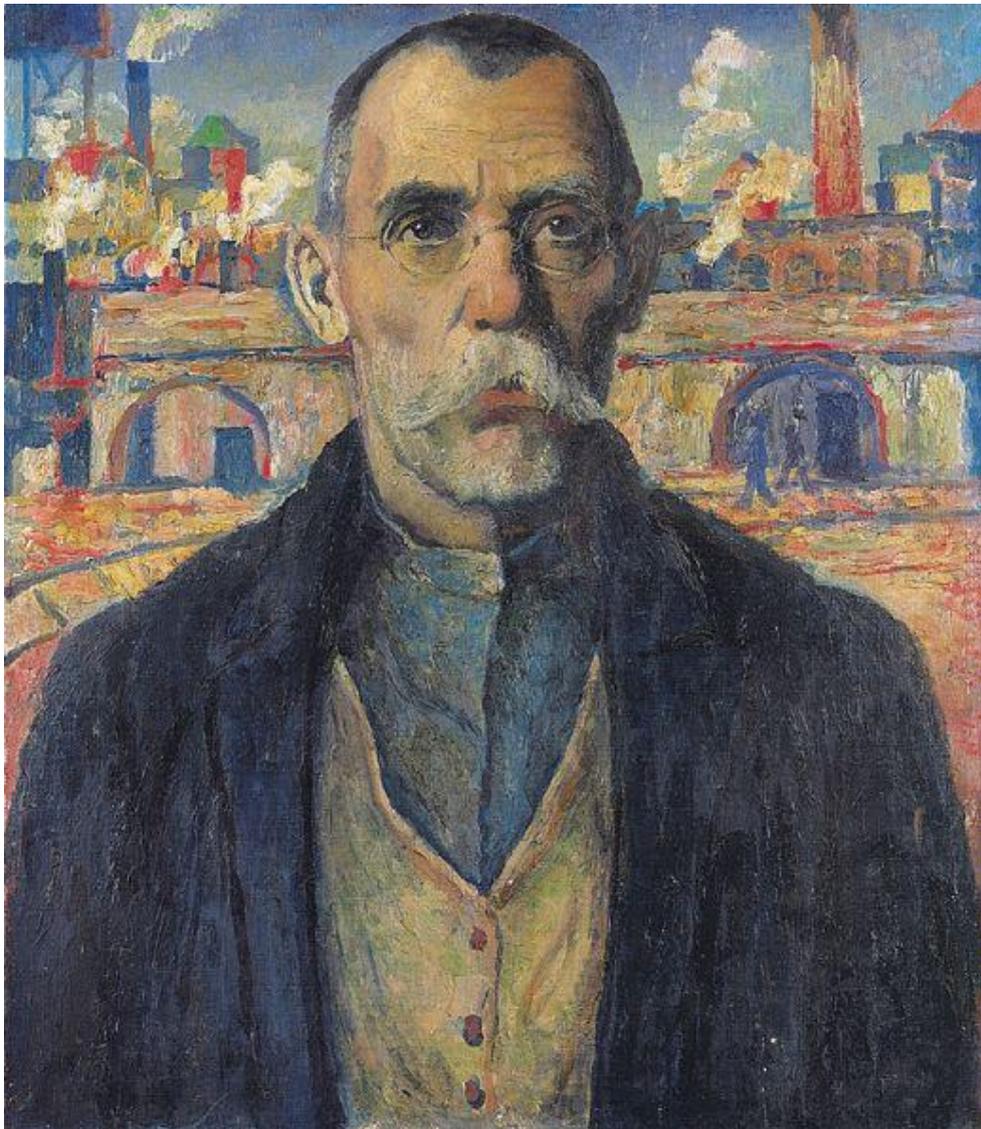


Workshop

# The Value of Labour: Ideas, Measurement, Custom, and Conflict in the Modern Era

*University of Cambridge, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021*

**Antonella Stirati**, Università of Roma Tre **Cléo Chassonnery-Zaigouche**, University of Cambridge **Craig Muldrew**, University of Cambridge **François Allison**, Université de Lausanne **Grace Davie**, Queens College CUNY **Helen McCarthy**, University of Cambridge **Judy Stephenson**, UCL **Limin Teh**, Universiteit Leiden **Massimo Asta** (organizer), University of Cambridge **Pedro Ramos Pinto** (organizer), University of Cambridge **Peter Scholliers**, Vrije Universiteit Brussel **Samita Sen**, University of Cambridge **Sigrid Wadauer** Universität Wien **Stefano Bellucci**, Universiteit Leiden **Tiago Mata**, UCL **Tobias Karlsson**, Lund University **Zoe Adams**, University of Cambridge



Kazimir Malevich, Portrait of a record-setter in work productivity, 1932

The spectacular increase of wage inequality in the last forty years across the globe has given new vigour to the debate on the value of labour and the determinants of the forms and hierarchies of work's rewards. It has inspired studies in sociology, anthropology, law, and economics, that are linked by a call for a more pluralistic understanding of the functioning of the labour market, reaching beyond the concepts of marginal productivity and market oriented subjective preferences. In economic history, it has revitalized research on real wages and living standards, a well-established, and vibrant field. Since the seminal work of Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Custom, Wages and Work-Load in Nineteenth-Century Industry* (1960), however there is scope to bring renewed attention to the role of moral, theoretical, social, and political factors that influence wage levels, and their connections with working conditions, including the role of conflict and social categories such as gender and race. This workshop is meant to be an opportunity to discuss the intellectual and social history of wages in the modern era dealing with different levels – local, national, comparative and transnational, as well as within and across different sectors. Bringing together new works adopting a historical perspective from a range of disciplines – History, History of Science, Economics and Sociology – the workshop will facilitate a productive interdisciplinary conversation and form the basis of a forthcoming publication. Contributions are invited from scholars across the social and human sciences, clustering around four themes: Ideas, Measurement, Custom, and Conflict.

- i) Ideas: Intellectual history of law and institutions, history of labour economics and labour management.
- ii) Measurement: its role in creating knowledge and labour markets through the actions of different actors and institutions; measuring and setting cost of living, and minimum, living and maximum wages.
- iii) Custom: social norms, institutions and studies of real wages, integrating qualitative approach and analysis of customary, broadly defined (traditional, formalized conventional, etc.), aspects of wage and reward.
- iv) Conflict: disputes and collective action, their impact on wage, expert and political campaigns, contestations, and mobilizations.

The one-day workshop will be hosted online on 7<sup>th</sup> May on Zoom.

Speaker will have 15 minutes to present the paper. The discussion will be opened at the end of each session.

## 8.30 am - Opening & Welcome

### 8.45 - IDEAS

**Antonella Stirati**, Professor of Economics, Università of Roma Tre

*'Adam Smith and his contemporaries on wages and employment - a conflict theory of income distribution'*

**Tiago Mata**, Associate Professor in Science and Technology Studies, UCL

*'Radical theories of worker discrimination for an age of trade union revival, USA in the 1970s'*

**Helen McCarthy**, Reader in Modern and Contemporary British History, University of Cambridge

*'Beatrice Webb and Women's Wages, c. 1880s - 1919'*

**Cléo Chassonnery-Zaïgouche**, Postdoctoral Research Associate, University of Cambridge

**François Allison**, Centre Walras-Pareto, Université de Lausanne

*A History of Wages*

**Zoe Adams**, Affiliated Lecturer in Law and Junior Research Fellow, University of Cambridge

*'Rethinking the Concept of the Living Wage: Ontological Presuppositions for Emancipatory Action'*

11.0 - Break

### 11.15 - CUSTOM

**Peter Scholliers**, Professor of Contemporary History, Vrije Universiteit Brussel

*'Shaping (and Contesting) Wage Forms in a Co-operative Bakery, 1880-1920'*

**Craig Muldrew**, Professor of Early Modern Economic and Social History, University of Cambridge

*'Conceptualising the earnings of spinners'*

**Sigrid Wadauer** Senior researcher in economic and social history, Universität Wien

*'Papers and Wages (Habsburg Empire/Cisleithania in the 19th and early 20th century)'*

**Judy Stephenson**, Associate Professor in Economics and Finance of the Built Environment, UCL

*'Was Hobsbawm right? Custom, wages, and the 'rules of the game' in a 21st century context'*

13.00 - Lunch Break

### 14.00 - MEASUREMENT

**Grace Davie**, Associate Professor of History, Queens College CUNY

*'Contested Measures: The Making of Poverty Lines and Minimum Wages in Twentieth-Century South Africa'*

**Massimo Asta**, Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellow, University of Cambridge

*'Down with the Caro-vivere! A Social and Intellectual History of the Cost of Living Statistics in Italy, 1910s-1920s'*

14.50 - Break

**15.00 - CONFLICT**

**Samita Sen**, Vere Harmsworth Professor of Imperial and Naval History, University of Cambridge

*'Regulating Wage, Realising Rights: Domestic Workers in India'*

**Tobias Karlsson**, Senior Lecturer, Lund University

*'Everywhere but in the strike statistics: Modern wage systems and work stoppages in Sweden 1863-1927'*

**Stefano Bellucci**, Lecturer, Universiteit Leiden

*'Labour commodification and social conflict in Africa: an historical perspective'*

**Limin Teh**, Lecturer, Universiteit Leiden

*'Enumerating fairness: wages and labour contractors in pre-1949 China'*

**16.45 - Concluding discussion**

**17.00 - Close**

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions -

