

ELHN Factory History Working Group

Factory Level Analysis: A Methodological Exploration

Organisers: Görkem Akgöz (Hacettepe University) and Nicola Pizzolato (Middlesex University)

Call for Papers

Although among different types of work, industrial work has received the utmost attention by labour historians, studies focusing on a single factory are very few. Factory as a site of both industrial production and social relations of production is often taken as given and treated as the backdrop for the real action. The ELHN Factory History Working Group (FHWG) calls for a reconsideration of this particular workplace as the site of one of the most important relationships in society that between worker and employer with the insights gained from the new social history.

This reconsideration could be carried out on a number of lines some of which are as follows. To begin with, the study of a single factory is based on a complex weave of history, economics, culture, labour, industry, production, and ideology. As such, the history of a single factory lies at the intersection of different disciplines, sub-disciplines and methodological approaches: social history, economic history, business history, urban history, Marxist social theory, sociological inquiry, discourse analysis and micro-level analysis. A complete study of factory history would have to look at a number of social phenomena related to its actual physical existence (such as its relation to urban space, to ecology etc.), as well as its economic, political and social functions. Thus, factory level analysis could put labour history in a dialogue with other historical fields of study resulting in a rich array of details on the experience of industrial work.

The study of the relations in production at the factory level allows the historian to depict the connections between the labour process and the changes in workers' consciousness and their individual and collective political behaviour could be depicted. Also, factory level analysis makes the divisions within the labour force most visible. Documenting this heterogeneity could also be helpful in understanding different types and levels of militancy, shop loyalty, alienation, and competition among workers. Moreover, a systematic study of factory files could bring the hidden, and isolated instances of resistance to surface. Focusing our attention on the level of factory not only enriches the historical details of that process, it also allows the historian to depict the dense and non-deterministic web of interrelationships at the point of production. Studying a single factory requires that the management is also given special attention. The analysis of the shaping and reshaping of the form and content of the managerial practices in relation to workers' resistance practices paves the way for a more dynamic depiction of the relations between management ideologies and practices and workers' reactions to these. Similarly, analysing the changes in the ownership patterns could shed light on their effects on labour relations.

The FHWG invites scholars to explore the methodological possibilities of factory level analysis. Both individual paper proposals and session proposals are welcome. Please send your proposal (200 words max. for single papers, 8000 words in total max. for sessions) to both coordinators until **30 June 2015**.

Görkem Akgöz, Hacettepe University, (gorkemakgoz@yahoo.com)

Nicola Pizzolato, Middlesex University, (N.Pizzolato@mdx.ac.uk)