

Self-employment in historical macro-micro perspective

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Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations Workshop

International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam

Next actions

- add paragraph on self-employment in context of labour relations (12a and 12b).
- recheck earlier proposed authors and current activity in the field

Introduction

The Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations is organizing a series of workshops on shifting labour relations in the world over the past five centuries. This workshop is the third in the series and focuses on shifts in and out of self-employment. Self-employment is an interesting labour relation, as self-employment allows people to earn a living, while to a large extent surpassing (im)plicit expectations about, for example, educational training and past experience, that usually are required to obtain a position on the labour market. However, this benefit of being ‘detached’ from (in)formal labour market regulations, comes with serious consequences as well, as is evident from the current debate on the increasing number of self-employed, many of whom are unavaible to afford mortgages or pension plans. While from a historical perspective mortgages and pension plans were unattainable to a great many on the labour market, it appears that in every society, self-employment as a way to escape (in)formal labour market regulations is juxtaposed with the lack of safety that such regulations provide.

The workshop at hand focuses on explaining what circumstances at the macro level (national, regional, city, social networks) and what characteristics on the individual level create oportunities and barriers for the push into or out of self-employment. For example, due to government regulation or crises, entry to or maintaining one’s position at the labour market may become more difficult forcing people into self-employment in order to earn a living. As another example, some people will have long term goals to go into self-employment, but first need to acquire enough capital. Government regulations or changes in family circumstances may affect the timing of these persons going into self-employment. To study and explain long term trends in self-employment we propose 5 different sessions representing an descending level of abstraction (see table 1).

Session	Topic
Session 1	Mechanisms of shifts in and out of self-employment
Session 2	Macro: shifts in labour relations
Session 3	Micro: shifts in labour relations
Session 4	Social structures of self-employment
Session 5	Self-employed as a life-course strategy

The first session focuses on the theoretical underpinnings of self-employment. Most of these mechanisms will be related to the juxtaposition of good and bad outcomes as a result of lack of (in)formal rules regarding self-employment. We invite speakers to mostly focus on mechanisms that have been discerned in demographic, economic, geographic political or social domains.

The second and third session focus on self-employment as an outcome on respectively the macro or micro level. Since historical data often lack the detail to make inferences about individuals, studies focusing on how country or state averages in self-employment fluctuate are welcomed in session 2. We especially invite contributions that compare several countries or regions, especially if such a comparison is made over time. For session 3, we invite studies that focus on shifts in the influence of mechanisms leading to self-employment. For example, whether the importance of economic or social capital changes over time. While in session 3 the outcome variable should be on the individual level, determinants may be on any level. In that sense, we especially welcome studies that study the interplay of macro and micro determinants of self-employment. As an example of such a study, one could think of how state regulation affects the influence of age or sex on self-employment.

Session four and five are specific instances of respectively session two and three. In session 4 the focus is on how social structures, on whatever macro level (country, region, social network) influences self-employment. Here one could for example think of how decrease in religious attendance, decreases social control on having a ‘regular’ labour market position, or how people from different religious groups are exposed to different levels of ‘risk’ to self-employment. Session 5 focus on a particular micro-level phenomenon namely varying levels of exposure to self-employment over the life-course. Here the idea is to study to study changes in the age at which people go into, or out of self-employment, for example, due to by-employment at the age of retirement.

Time	Title
12.30–14.00	Welcoming lunch
14.00–14.15	Introduction to the workshop
Session 1:	Mechanisms of shifts in and out of self-employment
14.15–15.00	Blanchflower
15.00–15.45	Hofmeester / Lucassen
16.00–16.45	Bögenhold & Staber
16.45–17.30	Moore / Mueller
18.00 -	Drinks and dinner
Session 2:	Macro: shifts in labour relations
09.15–09.30	Coffee
09.30–10.15	Caracausi / Mohapatra / Goodhue
10.15–11.00	Dawson
11.45–13.00	Fritsch / Wyrwich
13.00–14.00	lunch
Session 3:	Micro: shifts in labour relations
14.00–14.45	Kessler
14.45–15.30	Ajayi-Obe / Parker
15.30–16.00	coffee
Session 4:	Self-employed as a life-course strategy
16.00–17.15	Carroll & Mosakowski
17.15–18.00	Zijdeman / Stapel?
19.00 -	Conference dinner
Session 5	Social structures of self-employment
09.15–09.30	Coffee
09.30–10.15	Junfu Zhang (USA) juzhang@clarku.edu
10.15–11.00	Jan Lucassen – Lipper data
11.45–13.00	W. David Allen (USA, Huntsvill)
13.00–14.00	Lunch and good bye