

## Call for Panelists

Trafficking in human beings, esp. Trafficking in women as a business and as a market; from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the present; session at the XVIth World Economic History Congress, July 2012 in Stellenbosch, South Africa

This section shall analyse the development of trafficking in human beings (THB) – and especially trafficking in women – with the methodical and theoretical approaches of social, economic and business history from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the present.

The phenomenon of human trafficking as defined by the UN Trafficking Protocol of 2000 relates to 19<sup>th</sup> century slavery and is considered to be a form of modern day slavery or some sort of coolie system. It is important to note that in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, practices nowadays considered as human trafficking were referred to as “White Slavery“, Slavery and “*Mädchenhandel*“. THB was furthermore primarily seen as feeding into the sex industry. Forced labour, domestic servitude, and forced begging, among other forms of human trafficking recognized by todays internationally agreed upon definition, where not in the focus then.

For the past 20 years trafficking has been subject of political debates, programs and policies at several national and international levels. It became one of the hottest issues in the context of fighting organized crime and thus an issue of intense international police co-operation and high engagement of international organizations. Despite this new attention, trafficking in women is not „the *new* face of migration“ (Boidi 2003), but trafficking and national and international attempts to stop this crime accompany migration since the mid-1800s. The problem became part of the political agenda during two phases of accelerated economic globalization and technical modernization – between the 1880s and 1930s, and after the collapse of state socialism in 1989. As trafficking in most of the cases takes place across borders, international co-operation characterizes the fight against the crime. Several international conventions dealing with the problem have been passed in the last 140 years – be it by the League of Nations, the UN, the EU, the Council of Europe or conventions between states.

Finding the correct words for describing this crime remains a persistent challenge in combating human trafficking. Most formulations used to describe human trafficking focus on the trade or buying and selling of people. Other formulations refer to something closer to “smuggling” which relates specifically to movement across

borders; although human trafficking can also happen within a country and does not necessarily entail cross-border movement. THB is a matter of (organized) economic crime, illegal migration as well as an issue of exploitation of forced labor in migration processes and in the context of an international and gendered division of labor.

Nevertheless THB was mainly discussed under the aspect of human rights and especially women rights and a variety of moral aspects. Studies which focus on THB as a problem of social, economic or business history are rare. With this section we want to promote analyzing THB as a subject of social, economic and business history.

THB works like a market. It is obvious that THB can be understood as a market structure: The victims are bought, sold, traded and used. It is debatable whether the victims are treated like commodities or as workers on a demand market where the providers of manpower are in an extremely weak position: A growing demand for (cheap) labour, sexual services and particularly for women for (forced) marriages, as well as economic and demographic disparities has stimulated trafficking of human beings throughout time. In terms of demand, like demand in all markets, is a socially, culturally and historically determined matter and a social and political construct.

The perpetrators of human trafficking force individuals to work in conditions of forced labour, servitude, or debt bondage; this privation of freedom and poor living conditions is thus a severe violation of human rights. Efforts to combat THB have mostly been geared toward victim support and prevention as a response to the severe harm to victims, but little has been done to diminish the profitability of the business, which is why it is valuable to look at how this business has developed over time. Trafficking in human beings still continues to be a very profitable business in which traffickers face relatively small risks. For example, prosecutions remain very low in comparison to the scope of the problem. There are only around 4,000 trafficking convictions worldwide each year. Higher prosecutions would serve as a preventive measure by increasing the risk to human traffickers which in turn should reduce profits.

Between the 1880s and 1930s as well as after 1989 a variety of different actors has been involved in implementing international agreements and in *governing* the problem at national and sub-national levels: national, regional and communal governments, the judiciary, the police, and voluntary associations. Therefore it would be useful to integrate the markets for victims support into our debate.

### **Papers can deal with**

- THB or women trafficking as market structures
- Organizational structure, business practices of the traffickers
- Networks or firms?
- Trafficking as economic crime
- Social history of the victims (economic, family, regional, social, educational background etc.)
- THB as phenomena of industrialization and globalization
- Economics of victims support

- Correlation between anti-prostitution, anti-trafficking and anti-modernism resp. anti-liberalism campaigns
- Anti-trafficking activities as an arena of anti-capitalism
- Theoretical and methodological problems (Gendered economic history; problem of sources etc.)

Please send your proposal (about 5.000 signs) with a short cv (not more than 2.500 signs) not later than

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