The Boundaries of Work

Call for papers

Defining the constituent elements of work in ancient societies is a challenge for historians, as they generally do not correspond to contemporary conceptions of the professional world, which are often ill-suited to the semantic richness and fluidity of the categories in use in the ancient and medieval worlds. It is striking, however, that the notion of ‘frontier’ appears regularly when we attempt to define the contours of professional practices and their actors in these contexts. Legal/illegal work, work oriented towards self-consumption, work/work open to the market, urban/rural work, constrained/free work, paid/unpaid work are all oppositions to be questioned, shifting and porous notions to be discussed, in order to reflect on the complexity of work and its multiple variations in time and space.

For this tenth issue of Frontière’s, authors are therefore invited to identify and question the boundaries of work in protohistoric, ancient and medieval societies. All types of approaches and sources (archaeological sources, textual sources, epigraphy, iconography…) can be considered. Historiographical reflections are particularly encouraged. The following topics may be addressed, without limitation:

• spatial boundaries, at different scales (territory, city, buildings, internal organization of the workplace…); division of labour, workers and supply networks, work in domestic contexts…;

• social boundaries, in order to shed light on individuals and groups at work: criteria of status, gender or age; integration or marginalization of workers in society; training and apprenticeship; family work…;

• legal and institutional frameworks (written rights, customs, institutions), focusing on practices that appear at the frontiers of work: unpaid work, family work, forced labour…;

• the limits of representations, looking at the range of perceptions of work, from esteem to contempt. The way in which the identity of an individual or a group is affirmed through work, in words and images, will also be explored.

Authors are invited to propose both chronological case studies and surveys that explore the changing boundaries of work over the long term.

Editorial Committee

Louise Fauchier (HiSoMA), Éléonore Favier (HiSoMA), Marie-Adeline Le Guennec (UQÀM), Marine Lépée (ArAr – IASA-UNIL)

Timeline

• 31 December 2023: Abstract submission deadline (optional)
• 31 May 2024: Deadline for submission of full papers
• December 2024: Publication

How to submit

All paper proposals will consist of a text in French or English of up to 25,000 characters (excluding spaces), accompanied by abstracts in French and English (between 800 and 1,200 characters, excluding spaces) and keywords in French and English, and must be submitted by e-mail only to frontiere-s@msh-lse.fr including institutional affiliation, position and name of the author. If they wish, authors may submit an abstract of no more than half a page in English or French with bibliographic references by 31 December 2023 for an indicative opinion from editors (answer within one month). For further information: https://publications-prairial.fr/frontiere-s/index.php?id=535.