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Cfp: Workshop Waste Recycling, War and Occupation: A Transnational Perspective on World War II

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT, Karlsruhe, Germany), 14-15 June 2018

Times of war drive enhanced resource exploitation. Salvage is thus one essential and yet underexplored characteristic of industry, business, and society in warring nations. It challenges historiography in several ways. For one, waste and recycling often represent grey areas of economic activity, including the black market or informal work such as volunteer or forced labor. For another, waste handling pervades industrial production as well as everyday life, and under conditions of war and shortage, it became both a political means to mobilize the ‘home front’ and a way for individuals to survive constant shortages.

The international workshop “Waste Recycling, War and Occupation: A Transnational Perspective on World War II,” organized by Heike Weber (KIT) and Chad Denton (Yonsei University) thus aims to bring together the different historical sub-fields that have carried out research on wartime recycling so far, in particular, business history, the history of war and society, the history of technology, and environmental history. The workshop will analyze the scope and impact that recycling had during World War II, both for several regions and for different industrial branches. Additionally, it will ask what impact wartime recycling had on later patterns of resource use.

We invite papers that pertain to one or several of the following fields:

1) Nazi Germany, occupied Europe and the West:

Until now, research on wartime recycling by both economic and environmental historians has concentrated on Nazi Germany, on territories occupied by Nazi Germany, and on the British and American experience. What is lacking is a comparative approach as well as a transnational analysis on waste flows and waste business during World War II. Furthermore, the scope of recycling in Nazi Germany and occupied Europe is yet unclear, for instance, its role within Nazi racist ideology and the regime’s exploitation strategies or its impact on industry and everyday life. The workshop will address the following questions: How did Nazi Germany explore the concept of ‘total recycling’ and in what ways were forced labor or concentration camps integrated into salvage work? Which occupied regions were targeted for what waste resources? How did occupied economies implement recycling in trade and industry and to what degree was this done by force or by collaborating with Nazi recycling experts? In what ways were Nazi recycling policies similar or different to those carried out in Great Britain or the United States?

2) Wartime Recycling in East Asia
The workshop will include the case of imperial Japan and Japanese occupation to contribute to the question of the uniqueness of German plundering during World War II. Business historians have recently compared the different modes of expansion and exploitation of the German Reich and the Japanese Empire. Similarly, the workshop will analyze parallels and differences in respect to recycling under the conditions of war and occupation. For instance, what experience did imperial Japan have with waste recycling? In what ways did German recycling practices influence Japanese wartime recycling efforts? What role did recycling play in territories annexed and occupied by Japan in East and Southeast Asia?

3) **Wartime recycling’s impact on business, industry, and society from a transnational perspective:**

Taken together, the experiences of Word War II recycling in Asia and the West lead us to the assumption that the war can be described as a critical phase during which the material streams that fed the military, business, industry and society alike were substantially transformed in the years around 1940. To tackle this assumption the workshop will ask questions such as: What role did wartime recycling have next to – or in combination with – other tools of war, such as forced labor and exploiting foods and raw materials in occupied countries? How did wartime recycling efforts restructure trade and industry across national borders and occupation regimes? How and with what consequences were the flows of wastes and resources re-adjusted on a regional or even global scale? What impact did wartime recycling have on the later business of waste and recycling?

The workshop will be held at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT, Karlsruhe) June 14-15, 2018. We will apply for funding to cover travel and accommodation for accepted participants. The workshop will be based on pre-circulated papers (around 6000-8000 words) that should be handed in by mid-May. At the workshop, paper presenters will have the opportunity to present his/her paper in a 10-minute presentation, followed by a discussion. We plan to publish the papers in a special issue journal format.

Abstract submission:

Please, send in your abstracts in a single document (Word or PDF) including the following:

- your name, institutional affiliation, and contact information
- a 500 word abstract
- a one-page C.V.

Submissions shall be emailed to Chad Denton (chaddenton@yonsei.ac.kr) and Heike Weber (heike.weber@kit.edu) by December 1, 2017. We will inform you by mid-December on acceptance.