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Project participants

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Project narrative

*Speaking Prose, Speaking History of Economics:
New Conversations between the Humanities and the History of Economics*

The need for and the objectives of the project

Recent years have seen a genuine explosion of interest in the cultural influence and significance of economics at the borderline between the humanities and the social sciences. The *Journal of Cultural Economy* did a special issue on the Rhetoric of Economics (2015); (economic) sociologists like Nick Gane and Jens Beckert are writing histories of economic concepts such as competition and uncertainty; neoliberalism scholars from various disciplines have studied how economic concepts shape discourse and experience of the economy; literary scholars and political theorists, such as Sarah Skwire and Michelle Schwarze engage with Adam Smith; within the quickly growing field of history of humanities people like Mattias Rothe and Bastian Ronge have explored relations to economic thought; the work of Hayek has attracted the attention of historians of AI and machine-thinking; Elinor Ostrom's concept of the commons has captured the imagination of younger humanists including literary scholars such as Joe Albernaz. One could continue almost endlessly.

History of economics is an eminently open discipline at the intersection of history and economics. But historians of economic thought have typically studied the internal meanings of economic concepts and theories, not their broader cultural significance. The humanities scholars we highlight above have a keen eye for the broader meanings of economic concepts and theories, but sometimes lack knowledge of the internalist meaning of these concepts. Given our own experience both within and outside the history of economics community, we believe there are particularly huge and not fully explored opportunities for interaction with the humanities. Therefore we aim to:

- a. learn more about the work done in related research communities in the humanities, as well as
- b. make the history of economics community more visible to the broader range of scholars in the humanities.

By other research communities we mean, in particular:

- history of ideas broadly conceived;
- comparative literature/media studies
- socio-economics/international political economy;
- economic sociology and science and technology studies;
- critical management studies;
- anthropology

In these disciplines, across national contexts, there are scholars who read and engage with economic texts, and address historical arguments about economic ideas, economists, and their epistemic and political practices. This work has remained largely invisible within the history of economics community. Often the opposite is also the case: the work done by historians of economics is not really addressed within these communities, where it could find

a receptive audience and inform new lines of scholarship. The contacts, if they do happen, are scarce and accidental.

To be sure, these information asymmetries are reinforced by the relevant incentive structures within the disciplines, but in this project, we assume that there is always potential for learning on both sides, especially since many scholars are working on the same concepts, time periods and thinkers. In current academia it is often impossible to keep track of all the literature beyond one's specialisms, and therefore it is increasingly necessary to organize such conversations.

Project design including the major features and specific activities of the project and how they relate to the goals of the History of Economics Society

We envisage

- a thematic face to face workshop with historians of economics and people from other disciplines, in order to better connect, exchange ideas and explore the ways one can both learn from each other and collaborate. We will aim to match pairs of researchers from within and outside the history of economics community who work on the same or related subject(s). A result will be a selective special issue of a journal in one of the disciplines mentioned above. In designing the workshop we will pay specific attention to the most promising exchange/collaboration opportunities.
- a series of online interviews with selected 'outsiders' discussing with them their views on the history of economics and the ways of possible collaboration. Indeed, one of us has already conducted such an interview (see below). The interviews will then be freely available online.
- to discuss this project and its outcomes both with the community of the historians of economics and with at least two further big communities our 'outsider' scholars are coming from. To do that, we will showcase our project at the relevant meetings.

These activities relate directly to the goals of the HES.

- It helps *promote interest in and inquiry into the history of economics and related parts of intellectual history, and disseminate knowledge about the history of economics* by engaging broader communities of scholars (of all generations), by using the communication platforms and channels of other disciplines, and by informing the historians of economics about the work done in related fields;
- It contributes to facilitating *communication and discourse among scholars working in the field of the history of economics* by helping redefine and re-imagine the very idea of the history of economics and seeking to further enrich the field by the perspectives of other intellectual traditions that develop parallel to our discipline.

Tentative dates, proposed location, as applicable

September - November 2022. Contacting relevant scholars, designing the workshop;
Winter-Spring 2023 – workshop (preferably offline) (either in Fairfax, VA, or in Nijmegen, The Netherlands, depending on where the majority of scholars come from)

January-April 2023 – series of (online) interviews, contacting relevant journals, organizing papers for the special issue;

April -September 2023 – coordinating the work on the final products: special issue and a series of online interviews

Follow-up 2023 - showcasing the project at the relevant meetings.

Strategy for project evaluation

The project's success could be evaluated both by the interest within the history of economics community and by its visibility across other disciplinary and national contexts. The diversity of disciplines and perspectives, as well as the discovery of new prospective domains and opportunities for collaboration, should also be taken into account. The long-term effects of these collaborations, such as increased mutual engagement, common research projects, and co-authorships, remain less certain, but in the short-term, the forms of intellectual exchange we are suggesting in this project (workshop, online conversations, conference panels, special issue) will be made explicit and subject to evaluation.

Personnel who will be involved in the project and their roles

Ivan Boldyrev and Erwin Dekker will equally share the responsibilities:

- Designing, planning, and organizing the workshop
- Suggesting the relevant questions and topic of potential common interest
- Inviting the scholars
- Conducting the interviews
- Presenting the project
- Co-editing the special issue

A detailed budget indicating how the dollar figure requested was determined, how the money will be used and when.

Workshop costs

We envisage an offline workshop with about 12 participants about equally recruited from the history of economics and humanities disciplines. This will give enough opportunities for exchange.

We have made preliminary inquiries with our home institutions (GMU and Radboud) and both have indicated a willingness to host the event at no cost, and sponsor coffee breaks.

Travel and accommodation with 12 participants would be (in USD):

Hotel 12 x 3 nights x 100 a night = 3600

Flights/Travel 12 x 600 = 7200

Dinner 2 nights 12 x 50= 1200

Total 12,000

Brief Bio

Dr. Ivan Boldyrev is currently Assistant Professor at the Radboud University Nijmegen with interests ranging from the history and philosophy of recent economics to German idealism and critical theory. His books include *Ernst Bloch and His Contemporaries* (Bloomsbury, 2014); *Hegel, Institutions, and Economics* (co-authored with Carsten Herrmann-Pillath, Routledge, 2014, Japanese translation 2017), *Die Ohnmacht des Spekulativen: Elemente einer Poetik von Hegels "Phänomenologie des Geistes"* (Brill/Fink, 2021). He published several edited collections: *Enacting Dismal Science: New Perspectives on the Performativity of Economics* (with Ekaterina Svetlova, Palgrave, 2016); *Economic Knowledge in Socialism, 1945-1989*, Annual Supplement to *History of Political Economy* (with Till Düppe, Duke University Press, 2019); *Interpreting Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (with Sebastian Stein, Routledge, 2021). He has published in professional journals and edited collections in history and philosophy of economics; continental philosophy and critical theory; German literature and cultural studies; and history of science. His current work is on the history and sociology of recent economics, the links between economics and policymaking, and German idealism.

Relevant Conference/Workshop/Editorial Experience

With Till Düppe, I co-organized annual HOPE conference in 2018. This was preceded by an earlier conference on Cold War social science in Moscow, resulting in a special issue of the journal *History of the Human Sciences* (October/December 2016; 29 (4-5)), co-edited with Olessia Kirtchik and titled *Social and Human Sciences across the Iron Curtain*. Both these initiatives were aimed, among other things, at creating links between historians of economics and the diffuse and interdisciplinary community of Russian/East European studies.

I currently serve on the Editorial Board of *Serendipities: Journal for the Sociology and History of the Social Sciences*; work as a book review editor of *Æconomia --- History / Methodology / Philosophy*; and have recently become the member of the newly formed Book Review Advisory Board of *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*. In all these roles I seek to more actively engage history of economics with other relevant research communities, and vice versa.

Related to the project is the fact that I am working quite a lot with interviews material and have recently conducted an interview with the focus quite similar to the one proposed in the project.¹

I have recently received a grant from *Rebuilding Macroeconomics* (<https://www.rebuildingmacroeconomics.ac.uk/>) on a project titled *What do policymakers want from Macroeconomics? A preliminary exploration*.

¹ Vogl, J. (2019). (History of) Economic Knowledge Freed from Determinism: An Interview with Joseph Vogl. *Erasmus Journal for Philosophy and Economics*, 12(1), 73–92. (<https://ejpe.org/journal/article/view/409>). The interview has been quite successful: it also appeared in German (<https://www.soziopolis.de/oekonomie-markt-und-kapital-als-politische-kraefte-begreifen.html>) and Russian (<https://ecsoc.hse.ru/2019-20-5/320584421.html>). Note that the initial outlet is a journal in the philosophy of economics, the German website is closer to critical sociology/critical theory, while the Russian version appeared in the major national journal in economic sociology.

Brief Bio

Dr. Erwin Dekker is Senior Research Fellow with the F. A. Hayek Program for Advanced Study in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics and a senior research fellow at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. He has recently published *Jan Tinbergen (1903-1994) and the Rise of Economic Expertise* (2021) and *The Viennese Students of Civilization* (2016), as well as the edited volume *Governing Markets as Knowledge Commons* (2021) all with Cambridge University Press. He has published in professional journals in the fields history of economics, methodology of economics, cultural economics and economic sociology. He is currently working on a history of the intellectual descendants of the German Historical School as well as a project on markets at the margins of society, so-called grey zones. He has previously worked as assistant professor of cultural economics at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam.

Relevant Conference/Workshop/Editorial Experience

I have co-organized the international Values of Culture conference at Rotterdam twice (in 2019 and 2021), which brought together over thirty international scholars at the intersection of history, culture and economics. I was responsible for managing travel/hotel/dinner arrangements as well as the programming side of the event. In 2019 I organized a workshop on the Knowledge Commons with Pavel Kuchar, supported by a grant from the Mercatus Center. The two of us oversaw the organization of the workshop, as well as a smaller second edition in Rotterdam (supported by a local university grant) and turned the contributions into an edited volume which has just been published by Cambridge University Press (see above).

I was on the editorial board at the *Erasmus Journal for Philosophy and Economics* from 2017 to 2021, and I am currently book review editor at *Oeconomia* and editor at the *Review of Austrian Economics*, finally I am the editor of a special issue about William J. Baumol for *Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology*, which will be published during the summer of 2022.