

CfP – Workshop: “Histories of Maintenance and Repair”

We are calling for abstracts for our workshop on “Histories of Maintenance and Repair”, which will be held at the Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH) on 03-04 September 2020. The workshop is part of our FNR-funded REPAIR project that investigates the maintenance (practices) of the Luxembourg telephone network, continuity and change in local repair opportunities for everyday objects, as well as the role and influence of do-it-yourself cultures on repair practices. Based around the idea of “*repairing technology – fixing society*”, the project aims to highlight that maintenance and repair practices have not become obsolete in modern consumer societies and that both practices are still fundamental for keeping everyday technologies, the economy and society functioning and running.

The workshop seeks to explore the history of maintenance and repair in Western consumer societies in the short 20th century. We are interested in a variety of associated narratives ranging from personal repair practices to the maintenance of large infrastructures. The workshop is open to interdisciplinary approaches and aims to contribute to discourses in the history of technology and Science and Technology Studies (STS) that criticise the innovation focus of Western science and societies by emphasising the societal and economic importance of maintenance and repair.

While the existing literature on repair and maintenance practices in advanced consumer societies – which approximates the geographical interest of our project but does not necessarily reflect the scope of the workshop – is still sparse, the topic has received more academic attention in recent years. This has been reflected in a growing series of panels, workshops and conferences, including our own “Histories of Technology’s Persistence: Repair, Reuse and Disposal” workshop that took place in December 2018. Selected papers from that workshop will soon be published in an edited volume.

As sustainability is the implicit subtext of many repair narratives, we are interested in historical and contemporary discourses and critical reflections about the assumed relationship between maintenance, repair and (more) sustainable consumption. By looking at the epistemology, sociology, politics, economics and history of maintenance and repair we would like to contribute to the re-evaluation of maintenance and repair in society today. We invite you to be part of this scientific journey where failures, breakdowns and their patterns are an important element in both the basic relationship between users and technology and fundamental practices in everyday life. For this workshop, we are looking for interdisciplinary contributions that explore the following themes:

- the epistemology, sociology and politics of repair
- innovation through maintenance and repair practices
- social and economic sustainability
- the environmental impact of consumer societies
- experimental approaches in studying repair and maintenance
- maintenance and repair practices as forms of resistance
- the social construction of repairability and/or obsolescence
- philosophical, ethnographical and historical approaches
- the history of manuals and the transfer of repair knowledge in general
- repairability as an economic and strategic approach
- historical, economic and sociological perspectives on lifespans of objects

The C²DH will cover the travel and accommodation costs of invited workshop participants. Please send abstracts (400-500 words) and a short CV to rebecca.mossop@uni.lu and thomas.hoppenheit@uni.lu; the

deadline is 1 March 2020. We will get back to you by the end of April. Invited workshop participants will be expected to submit extended abstracts (1,500 words) by 15 August 2020.

Organisers: Stefan Krebs, Rebecca Mossop and Thomas Hoppenheit (Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History, C²DH)