

HISTORIA CRITICA

CALL FOR PAPERS

The cost of living: Knowledges, practices, experiences, and conflicts

Historia Crítica, journal of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Universidad de los Andes (Bogotá, Colombia), announces a call for papers for a thematic issue on “**The cost of living: Knowledges, practices, experiences, and conflicts.**” We are happy to announce that Eduardo Elena, professor at the University of Miami (United States), will serve as guest editor for this issue. **Articles will be received between February 15 and March 15, 2022.**

How much does living cost at any given time? What is necessary to live with dignity? How much is paid for the welfare, freedom, or loyalty of others? These old questions have taken on special importance today. On the one hand, the COVID-19 pandemic and the problems caused by this crisis have aggravated the struggle for survival of the most vulnerable sectors of society. The gap between the needs of the majority of “essential workers” and the comforts of privileged groups has exposed contradictions in how our economic systems create and concentrate value. On the other hand, citizens of countries who live under conditions of extreme inequality have reacted strongly against the rise in prices of basic necessities and public services and an increase in taxes, situations that have been added to new protest movements in the last years. Looking toward the future, the increasing automation of work has been raising concerns about how and what a growing percentage of humanity will subsist on. Consequently, we find ourselves at a propitious moment to reflect on the history of the cost of living and to think about the topic in a broader way that encompasses not only the indispensable methods of economic research, but also a variety of political, social, intellectual, and cultural perspectives.

This thematic issue seeks to trace how people have imagined, calculated, and tried to modify the cost of living over time. At one extreme are slave societies, in which human life itself is bought and sold as a commercial good. To these examples we can add societies characterized by regimes of servitude, colonialism, and coercive labor, which operate with their own logics of possession and control. Although these trends continue to weigh on the world today (for example, in the private prison industry), the attempt to place an economic value on the lives of others has generated a great number of relationships, practices, and forms of classification associated with the cost and quality of life. In the first half of the twentieth century, concepts such as the “standard of living” became powerful political tools. They served as a guide for

the creation of social welfare programs and economic regulation measures, and they were quickly incorporated into the demands of popular movements. In parallel, social scientists gathered detailed information on the rising and falling of prices, household spending patterns, and consumption trends. Despite the quantitative rigor of these efforts, these mid-century knowledges assumed a strongly patriarchal vision of the world, particularly in the definitions of “typical family” and the provider role of the “head of the household.” On the other hand, prejudices of race and region greatly influenced the decisions about which sectors deserved an improvement in their quality of life. In recent times, these impulses have continued evolving and provoking new controversies. Statistical criteria on the risks and costs of living prevail in health, insurance, and retirement systems, while several governments have experimented with conditional cash transfer programs and universal basic income plans.

Nevertheless, the history of the cost of living is not limited to these technical knowledges and political interventions. It is also important to consider the daily experiences of individuals belonging to different social backgrounds and their various strategies to deal with phenomena such as inflation, financial crises, and economic adjustments. In societies of advanced proletarianization and exposed to modern forms of precariousness, concerns with the price of housing, food, education, health, and other needs have been a key factor in the behavior of workers and consumers in various spheres. On a micro scale, these pressures have influenced the formation, maintenance, and breakdown of interpersonal ties within the family and local communities. In this regard, recent research on the history and sociology of money is especially relevant, because it offers new insight into the variety of ways in which human beings deal with spending, profit, and indebtedness.

Finally, we hope to receive articles that analyze cultural reactions to the cost of living. The study of judgments formulated through literary works, audiovisual arts, and graphic genres such as caricature can contribute to a better understanding of the moral frontiers of economic activity in different historical contexts. Like outrage, humor and satire have also been fundamental in attempts to put certain limits to the economic utility of human life. These forms of expression have been a way to conceive alternative futures and to encourage new ways of thinking about costs and values in general.

Thematic strands

This thematic issue seeks to open a space to study these dynamics in different historical moments and geographical areas. Concerns about the price of bread and other basic products are not a recent phenomenon, and neither is the impulse to pay money in order to dominate others or to maintain authority over subordinate subjects. However, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a remarkable expansion in the number of human beings whose well-being depended primarily on their monetary income and the distribution of commercial goods and services. How to deal with the costs of living under these conditions became an everyday problem for large sectors of the population and an important question for researchers, governments, and other actors. For this thematic issue, works considering the following thematic strands are of special interest:

- Support and resistance to efforts to place an economic value on human beings and on certain aspects of life.
- The impact of market logic on concepts of prosperity, dignity, and honor.
- The evolution of methods to measure costs, levels, standards, and quality of life.
- The political history of the cost of living, including protest movements, reform experiments, revolutionary alternatives to capitalism, and neoliberal attempts to unleash market forces.
- Legacies of slavery and other regimes of subordination in economic practices and ways of thinking about the value of human life.
- Policies, practices, and costs associated with bonds and rewards to prosecute and punish those who are outside the law or the established order.
- Survival strategies in times of economic crisis and times of high inflation.
- Personal experiences and collective stories of money.

We invite those interested in participating in this thematic issue to send their unpublished articles in Spanish, English, or Portuguese. Manuscripts must be in Word format and comply with the journal's submission guidelines: a maximum length of 11,000 words (18-22 pages approximately), single-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, letter-size paper with 3 cm margins. Author information should be submitted in a separate file. Footnotes and bibliographic references must follow the adaptation of the *Chicago Manual of Style* used by the journal.

For important rules regarding manuscript submission consult <http://revistas.uniandes.edu.co/for-authors/histcrit/editorial-policy>.

Non-compliance with the submission guidelines will lead to the rejection of the article.

Articles should be submitted through ScholarOne, using the link available on the journal's website during the call for papers period (Articles/Submission). Articles sent to *Historia Crítica* cannot be simultaneously submitted elsewhere or under review for another publication.