

Workers of the World

Exploring global perspectives on labour from the 1950s to the present

Symposium, 28.-30. June 2017, Schloss Herrenhausen, Hannover, Germany

How can we arrive at global perspectives on labour, which reach beyond teleologies of an all-encompassing “race to the top” (or “to the bottom”), but also beyond the notion of ever-increasing differentiation? This conference explores overarching trends in the political as well as corporate regulation and in the forms of collective organisation of labour. Such an exploration is understood as a precondition for an adequate analysis of the dynamics of current capitalism. It needs to be based on an examination of linkages and similarities, differences and unevenness, as well as of the wide variety of work constellations resulting from such trends in different parts of the world. Towards this aim, we hope to bring together scholars from the social and historical sciences who are prepared to leave the comfort zone of highly specialized area studies, in a common quest for transnational perspectives. The global economic crisis of the mid-1970s should function as a common point of reference, connecting post-war developments to the immediate pre-history of present constellations. Since this conference aims at identifying new empirical approaches to the study of labour in different world regions, references to methods and data are appreciated.

Wednesday, 28. June 2017

- 15.00 Welcome
- Wilhelm Krull (VW Foundation and Foundation Council, University of Goettingen)
- 15.15 **Mapping the field I**
- Nicole Mayer-Ahuja (SOFI/University of Göttingen)
- 15.45 **Mapping the Field II: From the perspective of ...**
- Peter Alexander (sociology of social change, focus on South Africa, University of Johannesburg, South Africa)
- Marcel van der Linden (global history of labour, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
- Rina Agarwala (sociology of informalisation, focus on India, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, United States)
Chair: Christoph Scherrer (University of Kassel, Germany)

17.15 **Get-Together with Poster session and Poster Presentation of young researchers**

18.15 Dinner

19.30 **Keynote**

Jan Breman: The end of Social Welfarism?

(University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Chair: Andreas Eckert (Humboldt-University Berlin, Germany)

Thursday, 29. June 2017

Session 1: Political Regulation of Labour: Trends and Contradictions

9.00 Papers and discussion

Chair: Ravi Ahuja (University of Göttingen, Germany)

- Sandrine Kott: Growth and Productivity as Social Policy of the ILO (Université de Genève, Switzerland)
- Bob Hancké: Beyond Varieties of Capitalism: Conflict, Contradiction and Institutional Change (London School of Economics, United Kingdom)

Comment: Christoph Scherrer (University of Kassel, Germany)

10.30 Coffee Break

Session 2: Labour at the Site of Production: Labour Process, Control, Quality of Work

10.45 **Keynote**

Paul Thompson: Capitalism, Contradictions and Conflict: Reflections on Global Challenges for Work and Workers from a Labour Process Perspective

(University of Stirling, United Kingdom)

Chair: Martin Krzywdzinski (Berlin Social Science Centre, Germany)

12.15 Lunch Break

13.30 Papers and discussion

Chair: Nicole Mayer-Ahuja (SOFI/University of Göttingen, Germany)

- Jörg Flecker: Global digital labour - delocalized work and the international division of labour (University of Vienna, Austria)
- Pun Ngai: "Student-laborers" at the Dormitory Labor Regime in China (University of Hong Kong)

Comment: Martin Krzywdzinski (Berlin Social Science Centre, Germany)

15.00 Coffee Break

Session 3: Politics of Labour: Collective Action

15.15 **Keynote**
Beverly Silver: Labor and Systemic Chaos: The End of British and US World Hegemonies Compared (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, United States)
Chair: Marcel van der Linden (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

16.45 Coffee Break

17.00 Papers and discussion
Chair: Martin Krzywdzinski (Berlin Social Science Centre, Germany)

- Jennifer Jihye Chun: Protest Cultures and Precarious Workers in South Korea (University of Toronto)
- Rohini Hensman (independent scholar): Workers and unions confronting global capitalism: The need for internationalism
- Sakhela Buhlungu: Unions in South Africa (University of Cape Town, South Africa)

Comment: Ravi Ahuja (University of Göttingen, Germany)

18.30 **Poster session and Presentation of young researchers**

19.30 Dinner

Friday, 30. June 2017

Parallel sessions 4-6 (9.00 – 12.15)

Session 4: Political Regulation of Labour: Trends and Contradictions (II)

9.00 Papers and Discussions
Chair/Comment: Andreas Eckert (Humboldt-University Berlin, Germany)

- Ben Scully (University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa): Labour Migration in Comparative-Historical Perspective: Ghana and South Africa 1960s-Present
- Nick Bernards (Queen's University, Kingston, Canada): Governing Irregular Labour: The Politics of 'Informal' Work and Unemployment 1970-Present in Sub-Saharan Africa
- Irene Pang (Brown University, Providence, United States): Precarity as a Legal Construction: Lessons from the Construction Sectors in Beijing and Delhi

10.30 Coffee Break

10.45

Papers and discussion

Chair: Martin Krzywdzinski (Berlin Social Science Centre, Germany)

- Paul André Rosental, Bernard Thomann (Science Po and Inalco, Paris, France): Job precariousness in the context of economic growth
- Ralf Hoffrogge (Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany): Engineering New Labour: Trade Unions, Social Partnership and the Stabilization of British Neoliberalism 1985-2002
- Iain Campbell (University of Melbourne, Australia): The challenge of casual work to labour movements: a two-step historical perspective

Comment: Lutz Raphael (University of Trier, Germany)

12.15

Lunch Break

Session 5: Labour at the Site of Production: Labour Process, Control, Quality of Work (II)

9.00

Papers and discussion

Chair: Nicole Mayer-Ahuja (SOFI/University of Goettingen, Germany)

- Jonathan Pattenden (University of East Anglia, United Kingdom): Labour Control Regimes and Collective Action: Capital and Labour in Bangalore's Construction Sector
- Stefan Schmalz, Natalia Berti, Johanna Sittel (University of Jena, Germany and Universidad del Rosario, Bogotá): Precariousness and Informality in the Argentinean Automobile Industry: A Global Perspective
- Elena Shulzhenko (Copenhagen Business School, Denmark): Paying for performance in Russia: between the customary and international approaches

Comment: Martin Kuhlmann (SOFI Goettingen, Germany)

10.30

Coffee Break

10.45

Papers and discussion

Chair/Comment: Kristin Carls (University of Göttingen, Germany)

- Praveen Jha (Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, India): Politics of Labour and Global Production Networks: Some Reflections from Experiences in India
- Brigitte Aulenbacher, Fabienne Décieux, Birgit Riegraf (University of Linz, Austria; University of Paderborn, Germany): Capitalism Goes Care. The Commodification of Care and Care Work, Social Justice and Points of Resistance
- Christa Wichterich (freelance author, researcher and lecturer): Transnational Reproductive Chains and Care Extractivism

Session 6: Politics of Labour: Collective Action (II)

9.00

Papers and discussion

Chair: Marcel van der Linden (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

- Chris Tilly and Rina Agarwala (University of California, Los Angeles, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, United States): Who defends informal workers? A comparison of the roles of trade unions, governments, and informal worker associations in improving labor standards for informal textile and apparel workers in Brazil, China, India, and South Africa
- Adam Mrozowicki (University of Wrocław, Poland): Young precarious workers in Poland: the experiences of work and the patterns of coping with the capitalist transformation
- Ad Knotter (Maastricht University, The Netherlands): Precarious labour and trade union response in the cleaning industry: a transnational history (1988-2012)

Comment: Ingrid Artus (University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany)

10.30

Coffee Break

11.00

Papers and discussion

Chair: Christoph Scherrer (University Kassel, Germany)

- Peter Wegenschimmel (Institute for East and Southeast European Studies, Regensburg, Germany): Socialist Bargaining: The Power Resource Approach in Socialist Economies
- Chitra Joshi (University of Delhi, India): The Promise of the 1950s and the Politics of labour in the Post-independence decade in India
- Thomas Goes (SofI Göttingen, Germany): A permanent revolution? Productive mobilizations, rationalization conflicts and the birth of competition-oriented labour relations in the (Western) German automotive industry 1980-2005

Comment: David Mayer (University of Goettingen, Germany)

12.30

Lunch Break

13.30

Round Table:

Globalisation of Insecurity? Workers of the World between Segmentation and Globalised Precarisation

Chair: Ravi Ahuja (University of Goettingen)

- Birgit Mahnkopf (Berlin School of Economics and Law, Germany)
- Ludger Pries (Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany)
- Gaochao He (Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangdong, China)
- Prabhu Mohapatra (University of Delhi, India)

14.30

Final Remarks: Steering Committee

15.00

End of Conference