



# THINKING ABOUT LABOUR WITHIN AND ACROSS EMPIRES

A one-day conference organised by the  
ELHN “Labour & Empire” working group

**Thursday 8 November 2018**  
**8.30 – 16.30**

Paris 3 – Sorbonne Nouvelle University  
Maison de la recherche  
4 rue des Irlandais, 75005 Paris  
Salle Claude Simon



**CRECIB**  
centre de recherches et d'études  
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UNIVERSITÉ  
**SORBONNE  
NOUVELLE**  
PARIS 3  
Membre de l'Université Sorbonne Paris Cité

CREW - EA 4399  
Center for Research on  
the English-Speaking World

# PROGRAMME

**8.30** | **Welcome**  
**Yann Béliard (Paris 3 – Sorbonne Nouvelle University) & Gareth Curless (University of Exeter)**

9.00-10.15 | *Methods of labour control*

9.00-9.20 Andreas Bolte (University of Freiburg, Germany):  
The temporalities of plantation labour in British Malaya  
and the Dutch East Indies in the early 20th century

9.20-9.40 Said Ennahid (Al Akhawayn University, Morocco):  
Labor and social action in colonial-period Morocco.  
The case of Muslim workers' housing in Casablanca (1912-1956)

9.40-10.00 Robin Chapdelaine (Duquesne University, USA):  
Labour and migration in Fernando Po.  
Reconstructing families via the Colonial State, 1950s

10.00-10.15 | *Discussion*

**10.15-10.45** | **Coffee break**

10.45-12.00 | *Transnational activism (part 1)*

10.45-11.05 Gemma Jennings (University of Birmingham, UK): Solidarity in the  
struggle against colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism.  
Labour activism and the Algerian independence movement

11.05-11.25 Zachary Davis Cuyler (New York University, USA):  
'A Better Life for Whom?' The labor history of Tapline in Lebanon

11.25-11.45 Geoff Brown (independent researcher): Pan Africanism and antiracist  
politics in Manchester, 1966-1969. A history 'from below'

11.45-12.00 | *Discussion*

**12.00-13.00** | **Lunch**

- 13.00-13.50 | *Transnational activism (part 2)*
- 13.00-13.20 | Steven Parfitt (Loughborough University, UK):  
The Knights of Labor and the imperial white working class
- 13.20-13.40 | Lorenzo Costagusta (University of Birmingham, UK):  
The limits of working class internationalism. Socialism and Chinese immigration in the United States, 1876-1890
- 13.40-13.50 | *Discussion*
- 13.50-14.40 | *Maritime labour (part 1)*
- 13.50-14.10 | Tristan Oestermann (Heinrich Heine University, Düsseldorf, Germany):  
Shipping “Boys”: German companies and the recruitment of Liberian migrant labourers for the West Coast of Africa, c. 1849-1914
- 14.10-14.30 | Dina Khoury (George Washington University, Washington DC, USA):  
Documenting and regulating slaves and bonded laborers in the Persian Gulf
- 14.30-14.40 | *Discussion*
- 14.40-15.10 | *Coffee break***
- 15.10-16.00 | *Maritime labour (part 2): roundtable on India*
- 15.10-15.15 | Naina Manjrekar (University of London, UK): The mutiny that ended the empire. The Royal Indian Navy mutiny of 1946
- 15.15-15.30 | Prerna Agarwal (London School of Economics, UK): For the red flag or in defence of Allah? The case of dockers’ unions, Calcutta, 1930s
- 15.30-15.45 | Svenja von Jan (Göttingen University, Germany): Indian seafarers and Indian agency in the illegal economy of the dock neighbourhood
- 15.45-16.00 | *Discussion*

**16.00 | Conclusions**

In the wake of the 2nd conference of the European Labour History Network (ELHN) at **Nanterre (2-4 November 2017)**, and with the 3rd ELHN conference (**Amsterdam, 19-21 September 2019**) already in mind, the ELHN “Labour & Empire” working group is organising a one-day conference at Paris 3 – Sorbonne Nouvelle University.

Access to the conference is free.

Please contact Yann Béliard ([yann.beliard@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr](mailto:yann.beliard@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr)) and Gareth Curless ([g.m.curless@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:g.m.curless@exeter.ac.uk)) if you wish to attend the event.

For information about the conference please check out the conference webpage: [www.univ-paris3.fr/thinking-about-labour-within-and-across-empires-504621.kjsp](http://www.univ-paris3.fr/thinking-about-labour-within-and-across-empires-504621.kjsp)

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Labour history over the past decade has become more global in its outlook – a welcome mutation that has not made national, regional and local studies redundant, but has allowed historians to ask old questions from a different, broader angle and also to embrace new objects and new methodologies.

The history of the British and more generally of the European and “Western” working classes can no longer be explored without consideration of the transnational character of capitalist development and of the cosmopolitan dimension this gave to class formation. The benefits of a global approach are possibly even more evident in the study of labour in the Global South, be it in the age of empire or in the post-colonial era.

The transnational and global turn should not, however, flatten and homogenise the experience of labour – the risk being a privileging of connection and unity over divisions, of subaltern agency and co-operation over power relations, of movement and mobility over fixed hierarchies.

Our task as historians is therefore to tackle both the circulation of radical ideas within and across empires, and the way States and employers tried to keep their migrant and diasporic workforce under control; both the cosmopolitan shapes of worker resistance and the racist, repressive practices imposed in the workplace and within certain territories to discourage collective action.

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