



International Conference of Labour and Social History

Internationale Tagung der HistorikerInnen der Arbeiter- und anderer sozialer Bewegungen
Conference internationale d'histoire ouvrière et sociale

A-1010 Wien, Wipplinger Str. 8 - Tel. +431 22 89 469-316 - Fax +431 22 89 469-391 - E-Mail: ith@doew.at - www.ith.or.at
Bank Account: Bank für Arbeit und Wirtschaft Wien 10010 662 074 - BLZ 14000 - IBAN AT21 1400 0100 1066 2074 - BIC BAWAATWWXXX

Call for Papers

62nd ITH Conference

Gender and Labour after WWII: Political Rights, Social Justice, and Welfare Politics

Linz/Upper Austria, 16–18 September 2027

Conference Languages: English / German

CALL FOR PAPERS

The ITH invites submissions for a conference which explores how social movements and political institutions engaged with women's – paid and unpaid – work, and gendered ideas and practices of work and labour in the aftermath of WWII. The period between 1945 and the 1960s was marked by major turning points for workers' rights, political engagement, and the development of social welfare systems and saw the struggle for the advancement of political and social rights of women around the world. Key contexts shaping the struggles on gender and labour in this period included border-crossing population movements and racialized diversity, changing patterns of international governance and social movement internationalism, post-WWII reconstruction, the economic boom, late colonial rule and decolonization, state-socialist catch-up development, and global sociopolitical competition. In different world regions and on the international stage, these contexts impacted on the engagement with gender and labour to various degrees.

The conference seeks to advance our understanding of gender and labour in the post-1945 decades from a global perspective. It moves beyond historical narratives of the post-WWII era which have considered the establishment of new political regimes in or after 1945 as an unblemished break with the past, or construed the post-WWII period, alternatively, as the historical moment of women's integration into society as equals to men or as a mere prequel to the global changes after 1968. We invite scholars to submit papers that critically examine the interplay of gender and labour in social movements and the politics of work and explore how this interaction influenced and was influenced by the shifting political, social, and economic landscapes of the post-war period. We are interested in women's and men's gendered demands and organizational practices, the nexus of masculinities and labour, and in papers employing cross-regional and transnational perspectives. We are looking for new answers to the question of how to conceptualize a gendered "aftermath" of WWII, in regional and global perspective.

Conference Themes:

1. How to conceptualize an aftermath?

Historical studies have referred to the end of WWII as marking the beginning of a new epoch. The immediate aftermath of the war has been described as an 'hour zero', as the era of 'reconstruction' after massive destruction or (colonial) exploitation caused by the war, and as a period of (coming) fundamental regime change in formerly Nazi-ruled territories, Eastern Europe and the Global South. We invite applications that engage critically with the interpretative frameworks historians have applied to the aftermath. Questions addressed in this theme include:

- How does this epoch compare to other watershed moments of postwar eras?
- How did labour activists themselves understand the impact of (the end of) WWII, the gendered (post)war labour regimes and the “new” world order of the Cold War?
- Which concepts can capture the immediate post-WWII years when considering regional differences, and putting gendered labour organizing and labour regimes centre stage?

2. Political Rights and the Long Shadow of Wartime Labour Mobilization and (Far-)Right-Wing Politics

The rise of far-right ideologies during the interwar period, political oppression of labour movements, and wartime labour mobilization which included elements of coerced labour left a lasting imprint on the labour movement. In the post-war period, labour movements had to rebuild from this legacy of repression while confronting lingering far-right sentiments and, in some places, new elements of mobilization into work. We aim to explore how labour movements fought for gendered political rights and social justice, while also confronting repression and strong-armed labour mobilization. This session invites scholarly contributions that explore the long-term impacts of gendered wartime politics on labour movements. The following research questions can be discussed in this section:

- How did the repression of labour under fascist and right-wing authoritarian regimes affect post-war labour organization and activism?
- How did labour movements advance workers’ political rights in the aftermath of the war?
- To what extent did labour movements confront or reconcile with former collaborators or sympathizers of far-right ideologies?
- How were conceptions of masculinity renegotiated within labour movements as they transitioned from wartime and fascist repression and coercive policies of labour mobilization to peacetime activism and changed political landscapes?
- To what extent did wartime repression of labour activism under different political regimes around the world shape forms of labour mobilization and political organizing in the post-war period?

3. Mass displacement and Migrant Work

Mass displacement and large-scale population movements are one of the characteristics of the aftermath of war. WWII and its aftermath saw people fleeing conflict zones, becoming refugees, prisoners of war, and subject to sometimes forced relocation and detention. The early Cold War saw massive political confrontation over the right to migration and governments’ control over citizens’ movement across borders. Displaced persons, people on the move, and people barred from free movement often faced discrimination, economic hardship, and exploitation, including in domestic work. In this theme, the intersection between labour movements and labour regimes, the state, gender, and migration could be explored through topics such as:

- How did labour movements and labour administrations address the needs and rights of displaced or detained women and migrant women workers?
- What forms of discrimination did these workers face, and how were or weren’t these challenges overcome?
- How did the inclusion (or exclusion) of migrant women’s labour shape post-war economies and labour politics in countries of origin and receiving countries?

4. Discrimination Against Women Workers and Multiply Marginalized Workers and Communities

The post-war period saw both advancements and setbacks for women workers, including multiply marginalized women workers and their communities. While labour movements and organizations were central to advancing workers' rights, they often failed to challenge gender, racial, and ethnic discrimination. In this section, the following questions can be examined, among others:

- How did labour movements and organizations react to or challenge the discrimination faced by women, workers of color, and marginalized groups in the workforce?
- What role did reference to multiple marginalization play in shaping labour movements' and organizations' policies and goals in the post-war era, if any?
- In what ways did multiply marginalized (women) workers organize for their rights within or outside of traditional labour structures?
- Were there explicit discourses on masculinities and femininities in the labour movement and labour organizations?

5. Labour and other Social Movements and the Struggles for Post-War Welfare Politics

One of the most significant legacies of post-WWII labour and other social movements is their role in the creation of welfare and universalist, socially inclusive labour politics. Labour unions and socialist and social democratic parties have been described as key players in advocating for state-led social security systems, healthcare, unemployment benefits, and pension schemes. Many of these policy schemes and advancements were deeply gendered. They tackled women as a special category of workers and engaged, implicitly or explicitly, with the gendered and racialized division of paid and unpaid work. As current research shows, the establishment of welfare politics in countries such as Great Britain and the Netherlands was made possible partly through revenues from their colonial territories. Against this background, we encourage papers which engage with questions such as:

- How did labour movements and organizations and other social movements influence the establishment of gendered post-war welfare and inclusive labour politics?
- What were the key political, economic, and social strategies employed by labour movements and organizations in these reforms?
- How did welfare programmes transform the relationship between labour, the state, and society, and what were the long-term consequences for the labour and other social movements?
- How did international and national labour organizations and other movements interact in shaping governmental strategies aimed at improving women workers' lives, mobilizing them into the labour force, or remoulding their role in the community?
- How did labour movements and labour activists interact with states, their agents (bureaucrats) and international experts?

SUBMISSION

Proposed papers should include:

- Abstract (max. 300 words)
- Biographical note (continuous text, max. 200 words)
- Full address and Email address

The abstract of the suggested paper should contain a separate paragraph explaining how and (if applicable) to which element(s) or question(s) of the Call for Papers the submitted paper refers. The short CV should give information on the applicant's contributions to the field of labour history, broadly defined, and specify (if applicable) relevant publications. For the purpose of information, applicants are invited to attach a copy of one of these publications to their application.

Proposals to be sent to our conference manager Laurin Blecha: conference@ith.or.at

CONFERENCE PUBLICATION

The ITH aims, depending on the coherence on quality of the conferences paper, to publish edited volumes arising from its conferences. Since 2013 the ITH conference volumes have been published in Brill's [Studies in Global Social History Series](#), edited by Marcel van der Linden. The ITH encourages the conference participants to submit their papers to this publication project. High-quality papers will be selected by the volume's editors.

TIME SCHEDULE

Submission of proposals:	31 January 2027
Notification of acceptance:	1 March 2027
Full papers or presentation version:	15 August 2027

PREPARATORY GROUP

Glaucia Fraccaro, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina
Veronika Helfert, Institut für Geschichte des ländlichen Raumes, St. Pölten
Shivangi Jaiswal, Ca' Foscari University of Venice
Tiina Lintunen, University of Turku
Susan Zimmermann, Central European University Budapest/Vienna
Therese Garstenauer, ITH Vienna

THE ITH AND ITS MEMBERS

The ITH is one of the worldwide known forums of the history of labour and social movements. The ITH favours research pursuing inclusive and global perspectives and open-ended comparative thinking. Following its tradition of cooperating with organizations of the labour movement, the ITH likewise puts emphasis on the conveyance of research outside the academic research community itself. Currently ca. 100 member institutions and a growing number of individual members from five continents are associated with the ITH.

Information on ITH publications in the past 50 years: <https://www.ith.or.at/en/publications/>

Online ITH membership application form: <https://www.ith.or.at/de/mitgliedschaft/>