



International Conference of Labour and Social History

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



INSTITUT
FÜR HISTORISCHE
SOZIALFORSCHUNG



österreichische gesellschaft
für politische bildung

L_nz

FWF

Österreichischer
Wissenschaftsfonds

PROGRAMME (Version: 28.05.25)

Workers and Worldmaking: Labor in the Era of Decolonization

25–27 September 2025

AK-Bildungshaus Jägermayrhof, Römerstraße 98, A-4020 Linz, Austria

Conference Languages: English – German

The 60th ITH Conference is organized by the International Conference of Labour and Social History (ITH) and kindly supported by the Chamber of Labour of Upper Austria, the Chamber of Labour of Vienna, the Institute for Historical Social Research, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Austrian Society for Political Education, and the City of Linz. The conference is part of the FWF-project (P34980) *A Socialist Workplace in Postcolonial Africa: A Connected History of the Yugoslav Workforce in Zambia* (see: <https://www.yuworkzambia.net/>).

Preparatory Group

Immanuel Harisch (University of Vienna), **Shivangi Jaiswal** (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), **Marcel van der Linden** (International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam), **David Mayer** (University of Vienna), **Goran Musić** (University of Vienna), **Saima Nakuti Ashipala** (University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa), **Therese Garstenauer** (ITH, Vienna), **Laurin Blecha** (ITH, Vienna).

Objectives

The success of decolonization in the post-World War Two Global South depended greatly on the ability of national(ist) political leaders to rally local labor movements behind their cause. Similarly, solidarity with anticolonial movements, or the lack thereof, showed by the labor organizations and workers' political parties in the Global North, played an important role in the "battle for the hearts and minds" inside the metropolises. Labor movements in the center and periphery were not isolated, with rich exchanges taking place via political events, international conferences, delegation visits, and material aid. Parallel to the struggle to assert their geopolitical importance, governments in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean sought to establish social contracts with their working classes and control trade unions domestically, while using connections with organized labor and political actors in more developed countries to attract development cooperation.

The global turn in the historiographies of decolonization and the Cold War helped move studies of labor in the Global South beyond their old focus on the formation of national working classes. Recent



International Conference of Labour and Social History

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

research on competing labor internationalisms, communist support for decolonization, transnational developmental entanglements, and South–South solidarities opened new vistas for thinking about the working classes of the emerging Third World as constitutive makers of global modernity. The concept of ‘worldmaking’ has proven particularly fruitful in encompassing the wealth of simultaneous and often competing practices of transnational collaboration in the peripheries during the Cold War. This conference aims to look at the role of workers and workers’ movements situated in the Cold War ‘South’, ‘North’, ‘East’, ‘West’, and ‘in-between’, in these practices of worldmaking triggered by decolonization between the 1950s and the 1990s.

Thursday, 25 September 2025

Registration at the venue

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 13.00–15.00 | Meeting of the ITH Board and International Scientific Committee |
| 15.00–15.30 | Break |
| 15.30–17.30 | General Assembly of the ITH |
| 17.30–18.00 | Conference Opening
Therese Garstenauer , ITH President
Gerhard Bremm , Chamber of Labour of Upper Austria
TBA , City of Linz |
| 18.00–19.30 | Keynote lecture
Samita Sen (University of Cambridge): <i>TBA</i> |
| 19.30–21.00 | Welcome Reception by the Major of Linz |

Friday, 26 September 2025

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 9.00–10.30 | Opening lecture
Frederick Cooper (New York University): <i>Solidarities and Differences: Decolonization, Labor, and the Limits of Nationalist Politics</i> |
| 10.30–10.45 | Coffee Break |
| 10.45–11.45 | Panel I: Biographical and Archival Perspectives on Labour Activism and Decolonization
Chair and comment: Shivangi Jaiswal <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Kolya Abramsky (London): <i>Let Those Who Labour Hold the Reins. The John La Rose Archive Relating to the Oilfields Workers’ Trade Union of Trinidad and Tobago (OWTU), held at the George Padmore Institute (GPI), London</i>▪ Shiraz Durrani (London): <i>Makhan Singh, Trade Unions and Class Struggle in Kenya</i> |
| 12.00–13.30 | Lunch |
| 13.30–14.30 | Panel II: Cold War Labour Internationalism and Decolonisation
Chair and comment: Goran Musić <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Jeff Schuhrke (SUNY Empire State University, New York City): <i>The UGTT’s Cold War Alliance with the AFL: A Case Study in Labor Internationalism from Decolonization to Modernization</i> |



- Eric Burton & Katharina Föger (University of Innsbruck & University of Vienna/Ghent University): *Anti/Colonial Worldmaking in Proletarian Print. Decolonization, Development and Construction of Solidarity in Austrian Trade Union Journals, 1953–1968*

14.30–16.00

Panel III: Decolonization in the Making (Part 1)

Chair and comment: Immanuel Harisch

- Joseph Duffy (Free University of Berlin): *Trade Union Internationalism and Self-Determination: A Global History of the Irish Labor Movement during Ireland's Revolutionary Period*
- Hyden Munene (Dag Hammarskjöld Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies at the Copperbelt University/University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa): *An Assessment of the Role Played by the Mineworkers' Union of Zambia in Nationalist Politics between 1955 and 1991*
- André Ribeiro Fernandes (Universidade do Minho, Braga, Portugal): *Going Abroad: Anticolonial Labour Unions in Angola, and the Quest for International Recognition (1960–1973)*

16.00–16.30

Coffee Break

16.30–18.00

Panel IV: Decolonization in the Making (Part 2)

Chair and comment: Marcel van der Linden

- Naina Manjrekar (Indian Institute of Technology Bombay): *Subaltern Worldmaking after War: India, Indonesia and the Indian Ocean Anticolonial Moment, 1945–1946*
- Rahul Maganti (University of Göttingen): *The Crisis of Capital in the Bombay docks, 1942–1956*
- Geert Van Goethem (Ghent University): *The Barren Rocks of Aden. Class, Nationalism, gender and religion in a competing strive towards independence. 1955–1967.*

18.30–19.30

Dinner

19.30–21.00

Special Event (in German)

Invited guests:

TBA

Moderation: TBA

Saturday, 27 September 2025

9.00–11.00

Panel V: Networks & Exchanges: East–South–South–North

Chair and comment: David Mayer

- Albert Manke (Ca' Foscari University of Venice): *Experiences and Impact of Woman Workers in Feminist Networks Between Cuba, the NAM and the Socialist Bloc during the Cold War*



- Lisa Hoppel (University of Vienna): *Navigating Competing Labour Internationalisms: African Experiences at Israel's "Afro-Asian Institute for Labour Studies and Co-operation" (1960–1970)*
- Tom Drechsel (Friedrich Schiller University Jena): *Between Anti-colonial Solidarity and Post-colonial Exploitation: Labour Migration from Mozambique to the GDR in the Wake of Mozambican independence*
- Bettina Ruhl (New York University): *Migrant Domestic Labor and the Wages for Housework Movement, 1972–1977*

11.00–11.15 Coffee Break

11.15–12.45 **Panel VI: Apartheid, Labour, and Resistance**

Chair and comment: Saima Nakuti Ashipala

- Darren Wan (Cornell University): *Apartheid Australia: Anticolonial Internationalism in the Making of the Union of Christmas Island Workers*
- Alex Lichtenstein (Indiana University): *Black Consciousness, Zulu Nationalism, and South Africa's 'New Left': Understanding the 1973 Durban Strikes*
- Duncan Money (Entebbe): *Colonial Hangovers? International Labour Organisations, White Officials and African Workers in Southern Africa*

13.00–14.00 Lunch

14.00–15.00 **Concluding Debate**

Moderation: Immanuel Harisch, Shivangi Jaiswal, Marcel van der Linden, David Mayer, Goran Musić and Saima Nakuti Ashipala