



International Conference of Labour and Social History

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



PROGRAMME (28.8.2018)

“Workplace Democracy Revisited: Labour and Practices of Participation, Workers’ Control and Self-Management in Global Perspective”

6 – 8 September 2018

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

Conference Languages: English – German

54th ITH Conference, organized by the International Conference of Labour and Social History (ITH), kindly supported by the Chamber of Labour of Upper Austria, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and the City of Linz.

Preparatory Group

Dario Azzellini (ILR School, Cornell University, Ithaca), **Frank Georgi** (Centre d’Histoire Sociale du XXème Siècle / Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne), **Goran Musić** (Central European University, Budapest), **Lukas Neissl** (ITH, Vienna), **Brigitte Pellar** (Vienna), **Anne Sudrow** (Berlin)
Advisers: **Marcel van der Linden** (International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam), **Susan Zimmermann** (ITH, Vienna)

Objectives

The attempts to extend democracy from the political sphere to labour relations and the broader economy (*Self-Government in Industry*, as G.D.H. Cole wrote in 1917) keep resurfacing in various forms and under different names throughout the existence of both modern industry and agriculture. Producer cooperatives have been an alternative form of enterprise organization in capitalist economies at least since the 19th century. Very different schools of thought supporting workers’ “associationism” – socialist, anarchist, Christian – have seen worker-run enterprises as the basis of a more egalitarian society. Communist revolutionaries envisioned workers’ councils as the building block of post-capitalist political and social structures ever since soviets came to prominence in the 1905 and 1917 revolutions in Russia, but also a range of revolutionary stirrings in the aftermath of World War I (Germany and Austria 1918-19, Hungary 1919, Italy 1920, etc.). After the failed attempts of revolutionary change in Europe, the German, Austrian and Czechoslovakian states introduced new legislations enabling workers’ participation and representation on the enterprise level to various degrees.

During the Cold War countries, such as Israel, Algeria, Peru and, most prominently, Yugoslavia, attempted to carve out a third way model of development by implementing workers’ self-management structures in their economies. Many postcolonial state building projects in Africa and beyond fused the idea of workplace democracy with local communal traditions. Workers’ self-management also served as an inspiration to dissidents in Eastern Europe (Hungary, Poland), while closely related terms such as *autogestion* and even *operaismo* became leitmotifs within the 1968 movement in Southern Europe as a vision of a more democratic socialism. Numerous welfare state models in the European countries, ascribed to the political “West”, developed partly far-reaching legal bases for workers’ participation, often relying on the concepts introduced by the legislative reforms immediately after World War I.

In the 1980s, the self-management ideals of liberation in the most developed capitalist societies and in factories worldwide often metamorphosed into management tools within the framework of neoliberal politics. While many activists in (state-)socialist Eastern Europe envisioned workplace democracy as an opportunity to introduce economic democracy from below, notions of workplace autonomy were also used by the pro-market

reformists inside the communist parties to decrease guaranteed workers' rights. During the 1990s, when it seemed that the ideas of workers' engagement in economic decision-making lost validity, a movement of factory occupations emerged in Argentina and other countries in Latin America, provoking a new wave of interest and debates about the perspectives of workplace democracy in the 21st century.

As this short historical outline shows, initiatives for democratization of labour relations were carried by vastly disparate social actors under diverse types of labour regimes and political rule in many different parts of the globe. Not surprisingly, a substantial research literature on these phenomena has developed. Yet, studies of workers' activation tend to have a narrow focus when it comes to the socio-economic complexity and the geographical scope of workplace democracy. Firstly, the topic has traditionally attracted left-leaning social scientists and heterodox economists inclined to look at the political organizing of the working class and economic performance of the enterprises respectively, thus overlooking labour relations and the inner workings of workplace democracy. Secondly, the studies were habitually framed in the context of individual nation states with the most illustrious historical projects claiming workers' emancipation attracting the greatest attention. The attempts to produce overviews on the history of workers' participation, control and self-management practices in different countries usually amounted to collections of individual case studies with moderate comparison, disregarding mutual influence, transnational exchange and transfers.

In order to contribute to closing some of these gaps, the 2018 ITH Conference poses the following two strategic goals:

1.) To unpack and categorise the often interchanging terms and conceptualizations of workplace democracy such as *self-management*, *control*, *participation*, *co-determination* and *autogestion* (in different languages) by tracing their evolution globally and relating them to particular geographic locations, cultural contexts and historical conjunctures.

2.) To examine workplace democracy beyond the political history of workers' movements or business history of alternative management models by investigating the actual practices of workers' involvement, decision-making and work conditions in concrete cases.

Thursday, 6 September 2018

Registration of participants at the venue

12.00 – 14.00 Meeting of the ITH Board and the International Scientific Committee

14.00 – 14.30 Break

14.30 – 16.30 General Assembly of the ITH

16.30 – 17.00 Aperitif

17.00 – 17.30 **Conference Opening**

Susan Zimmermann, ITH President

Franz Molterer, Deputy Director of the Chamber of Labour of Upper Austria

17.30 – 19.15

Keynote Lecture

Dario Azzellini (ILR School, Cornell University, Ithaca): ***Liberating Labour? The Multiple Facets of Workplace Democracy in Space and Time***

19.15 – 21.00

Welcome Reception by the Major of Linz

Friday, 7 September 2018

Registration of participants at the venue

9.00 – 11.00

Panel I: Strike, Occupation, Control: Exercising Workers' Power

Chair and comment: David Mayer (Vienna)

- Ralf Hoffrogge (Institute for Social Movements, Ruhr-University Bochum): *Councils and Revolution – Workers' Self-Management as Theory and Practice of Political Mobilisation in the German Revolution 1918/1919*

- Ugnė Marija Andrijauskaitė (Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas): *Taking Matters into Their Own Hands: Lithuanian Bakers in 1920s-1930s*
- Ettore Bucci (Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa): *Autogestion (1965-1970): A Transnational Sign of Change?*
- Dietmar Lange (Freie Universität Berlin): *Workers' Autonomy and Workers' Control in the Largest European Automotive Plant: The Factory Council at FIAT Mirafiori*

11.00 – 11.15 Coffee Break

11.15 – 12.45 **Panel II: Involving the Workforce – Changing Workers' Subjectivities**

Chair and comment: Stefano Agnoletto (Fondazione ISEC, Sesto San Giovanni-Milano)

- András Tóth (Institute of Political Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest) & Eszter Bartha (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest): *Role of Craft Unions in Ensuring Practical Ownership of Workplaces in the Pre-War Period in Hungary*
- Frank Georgi (Centre d'Histoire Sociale du XXème Siècle / Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne): *The Iron Law of Self-Management? The Boimondau "Community of Work" Experiment (France, 1941-1971)*
- Orestis Varkarolis (Nottingham Trent University) & Daniel King (Nottingham Trent University): *Co-Evolving Decision-Making for Integrated Self-Management: The Case of the Worker Cooperatives Network of Athens*

12.45 – 13.45 Lunch

13.45 – 15.15 **Panel III: Self-Organizing, Market and Democracy in State-steered Economies in Eastern and Southern Europe During the Cold War**

Chair and comment: Goran Musić (Central European University, Budapest)

- Vladan Vukliš (Archives of the Republic of Srpska, Banjaluka): *Self-Management in the Bosnian Ljubija Iron Mines in the early 1960s: A Case Study*
- Dirk Dalberg (Institute of Political Science, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava): *(Workers') Self-Management as Alternative Model to Socialism with a Human Face and Bourgeois Democracy: The Czech Perspective*
- Anna Delius (Freie Universität Berlin): *Social Necessity or Human Right? Workers and Intellectuals discussing Self-Organization in Alternative Press Publications in Francoist Spain and in State Socialist Poland in the 1960s and 1970s*

15.15 – 15.30 Coffee Break

15.30 – 17.30 **Panel IV: Labour Participation and Nation Building**

Chair and comment: Marcel van der Linden (International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam)

- Brigitte Pellar (Vienna): *"The People are also ready to hold Economic Democracy": Participation, Empowerment and Self-Management in Austria after both World Wars*
- Nikolas Lelle (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin): *National Socialism and the "German Worker"*
- Jasmin Ramović (University of Manchester): *Economy and Inter-Ethnic Cohesion in Former Yugoslavia: Reflections on Socialist Self-Management*
- Peyman Jafari (University of Amsterdam / International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam): *Workers' Control during the Iranian Revolution: The Case of the Oil Industry*

17.30 – 18.30 Dinner

19.00 – 21.00

Public evening event (in German):

“Ohne Selbstverwaltung keine Sozialversicherung: Über das historische Ringen um eine selbstverwaltete Arbeiterkammer und Sozialversicherung” (at the venue)

Saturday, 8 September 2018

9.30 – 11.00

Panel V: Institutionalizing Workplace Democracy under Trans/National Regulatory Regimes

Chair and comment: Anne Sudrow (Berlin)

- Holger Czitrich-Stahl (Förderkreis Archive und Bibliotheken zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung, Berlin): *The Development of German Labour Law between Revolution and Domestication: The Struggle over Laws as a Means for the Democratisation of Work in the 19th Century*
- Stan De Spiegelaere (European Trade Union Institute, Brussels): *The Non-Advent of Economic Democracy in Belgium: A Focus on the Christian Trade Union*
- Sara Lafuente Hernández (European Trade Union Institute, Brussels), Sophie Rosenbohm (University of Duisburg-Essen) & Mona Aranea (Cardiff University): *Forging European Co-Determination: The Experience of Board-level Employee Representatives in European Companies (SE)*

11.00 – 11.15

Coffee Break

11.15 – 12.45

Panel VI: Participatory Impulses and the Dynamics of Neoliberal Cooptation

Chair and comment: Roberto Frega (Centre Marc Bloch/CNRS, Berlin)

- Cian McMahon (National University of Ireland, Galway): *The Political Economy of Worker Cooperative Development in Ireland*
- Benjamin Ferschli (Johannes Kepler University Linz / Vienna University of Economics and Business): *Capitalism without Bosses: Control over the Labour Process in the Self-Managing Firm*
- Wolfgang G. Weber (University of Innsbruck) & Christine Unterrainer (University of Innsbruck): *The Specific Practice of Democracy in Democratic Companies and their Psychological and Societal Potential*

12.45 – 13.45

Lunch

13.45 – 15.45

Roundtable: Classifying Workplace Democracy across Geographic, Cultural and Historical Contexts

Chair and comment: Goran Musić (Central European University, Budapest)

- Dario Azzellini (ILR School, Cornell University, Ithaca)
- Anne Sudrow (Berlin)
- György Széll (Osnabrück University)