



International Conference of Labour and Social History

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

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PROGRAMME (Version: 24.08.2022)

'The Political Ecology of Work in Times of Disaster'

22-24 September 2022

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

Conference Languages: English – German

57th ITH Conference, organized by the International Conference of Labour and Social History (ITH), kindly supported by the Chamber of Labour of Upper Austria, the Chamber of Labour of Vienna, the Austrian Society for Political Education, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, and the City of Linz.

The 57th ITH Conference takes place on-site in Linz/Austria. We offer the possibility to join the conference online for participants who cannot travel to Linz for specific reasons.

Preparatory Group

Rolf Bauer (ITH, Vienna), **Adrian Grama** (Leibnitz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies-IOE, Regensburg), **Chitra Joshi** (Association of Indian Labour Historians-AILH, New Delhi), **Stefan Müller** (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung-FES, Bonn), **Susan Zimmermann** (ITH, Vienna)

Objectives

The onset of the global pandemic radically challenged the world of work. Lockdowns and other public health policies re-segmented labour markets, reallocated rights and reinforced privileges. Homework exploded, all while workers deemed "essential" kept on risking their health in services, care, slaughterhouses and farms. Both in the Global South and the Global North, labour legislation was rolled back, and trade-unions muted. The 2022 ITH conference takes from the present epidemiological crisis to also reflect on other times of disaster and their implications for workers, organised labour and labour relations. This includes disasters triggered by technological hazards, such as mining accidents or the explosion of gas plants, disasters triggered by environmental hazards, such as earthquakes or forest fires, and epidemiological disasters, such as the Bubonic Plague, the Influenza of 1918 and the current Covid-19 pandemic.

No disaster is purely natural. A disaster takes place within environmental, social, economic and political contexts that ultimately determine the impact of a disaster. Human Intervention is important to the outbreak of such events. It is human society, not nature, that is in crisis due to viruses, geological or climatic changes; it is human society that produces technological disasters; it is the geo-ecological shifts between humans (society) and nature that can produce biophysical hazards. The social and economic impact of a hazard is determined by nature and extent of societal vulnerability. It is this societal vulnerability that turns a hazard into a disaster, the endemic into an epidemic.

How well societies prepare for, cope with or recover from disasters is determined by their social, political, economic and cultural vulnerability and their capacity to absorb these shocks (their resilience). At the ITH conference 2022 we focus on how labour was affected by and dealt with disasters in both a long-term and short-term perspective. We approach this topic through the lens of political ecology, i.e. we take the viewpoint of both environmental history and Marxist political economy.

There are numerous factors that deepen labourer's vulnerability and their capacity to cope with shocks: environmental, economic or institutional factors. Studying disasters via a political ecology approach allows us to analyse these factors in a combined way. From a political ecology approach, we see that the expansion of capitalism and the inherent exploitation of both labour and nature has had a severe impact on workers' vulnerability to hazards: it worsened the livelihood of many, and weakened communal institutions (e.g. commons), but has also created the preconditions for environmentally-induced disasters. These pre-conditions materialise in varied ways in different societal contexts – a heterogeneity that needs to be explored.

Thursday, 22 September 2022

Registration of participants at the venue

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

14.00 – 14.30 Break

14.30 – 16.30 General Assembly of the ITH

17.00 – 17.30 **Conference Opening**

ITH President

Representative of the Chamber of Labour of Upper Austria

Representative of the City of Linz

17.30 - 19.15 **Layers, futures, pasts: A Conversation on the ITH**

With this informal conversation we would like to use the occasion of another transition in the history of the ITH to give a glimpse into the layers of ITH pasts, present and possible futures. Panelists discuss their personal, political, institutional and academic investment and experience with the ITH.

Moderation: Susan Zimmermann

19.15 – 21.00 **Welcome Reception by the Major of Linz**

Friday, 23 September 2022

9.30 – 11.00 **Opening Lecture**

Louisa Acciari (University College London): *Care Work as an Act of Resistance in Times of Crisis*

11.00 – 11.15 Coffee Break

11.15 – 12.45 **Panel I: Epidemiological Disasters**

Chair and comment: Rolf Bauer

▪ Daniel Curtis (Erasmus University Rotterdam): *Epidemics, Inequalities, and Inequalities Behind the Inequalities in the Premodern Past*

▪ David Arnold (University of Warwick): *Indian Labour and Responses to the Plague and Influenza Pandemic of 1896-1900 and 1918-20*

▪ Michael Pammer (Johannes Kepler University Linz): *The epidemiology of the Spanish flu*

12.45 – 14.00 Lunch

14.00 – 15.30 **Panel II: Technological Disasters**

Chair and comment: Stefan Müller

▪ Elif İrem Az (Columbia University): *The undead strike at the limit of the accidental: Soma and Ermenek miners' protests between October 2019-July 2021*

▪ Dorothea Hoehtker (Research Department of the International Labour Office, Geneva):

Changing the perspective on working conditions and the environment – the Bhopal disaster and the ILO

- Clement Masakure (University of the Free State, Bloemfontein) and Duncan Money (Leiden University): *Fiery Collieries' and Explosive Situations: Towards a History of the 1972 Hwange Colliery Disaster*

15.30 – 15.45 Coffee Break

15.45 – 17.15 **Panel III/Part 1: Covid-19**

Chair and comment: Therese Garstenauer

- Camille Buat (Sciences Po/University of Göttingen): *Covid-19 and the crisis of social citizenship in India*
- Ayça Yılmaz Deniz (Turkish-German University, Istanbul): *Labour in times of the Covid-19 pandemic in Turkey: Paradigm change between sense and the loss of meaning*
- Sampurna Das (University of Delhi): *Gendered experiences of vulnerability amongst community health workers of riverine regions of Assam, India*

17.15 – 19.00 Dinner

19.00 – 21.00 **Public evening event (in German)**

Yes we Care! Care Work in times of multiple crisis

Moderation: Laurin Blecha

Saturday, 24 September 2022

9.30 – 10.30 **Panel III/Part 2: Covid-19**

Chair and comment: Laurin Blecha

- Özlem İlyas (Boğaziçi University, Istanbul): *Affective and Political Implications of Remote Working during the Covid-19 Pandemic*
- P.K. Viswanathan (Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham): *Integration of Global Trade in Plantation Commodities with Labour Standards in the post-Covid-19 pandemic era: A Study of Tea Plantations in India*

10.30 – 10.45 Coffee Break

10.45 – 12.45 **Panel IV: Disaster Response**

Chair and comment: Adrian Grama

- Eleonóra Géra (Eötvös Loránd University): *Epidemic and conspiracy theories in the 18th century: The social context of the 1739 black plague revolt in Buda*
- Matt Myers (British School at Rome/University of Oxford): *The Italian workers' movement and the 1980 Irpinia earthquake*
- Matt Perry (Newcastle University): *'Metabolic rift' at work and within labouring minds: Firefighters' occupational environmentalism and the experience of disaster*
- Mario Keller (University of Vienna): *Othering, Conspiracy Narratives and Violence in the Context of Pandemics – Three Case Studies*

12.45 – 14.30 Lunch

14.30 – 15.30 **Concluding Debate**

Chair: Stefan Müller

