



**International Conference of Labour and Social History**

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

## **58<sup>th</sup> ITH Conference**

### **Deindustrialization, Reindustrialization and Economic Transitions – Transnational Perspectives from Labour History**

**Linz/Upper Austria, 7–9 September 2023**

Conference Languages: English / German

#### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

Industrialization and deindustrialization have been global and combined phenomena ever since the Industrial Revolution. The wave of industrialization associated with England in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries formed but one element of a dramatic global restructuring of production which came with the loss and transformation of livelihoods in other parts of the world. India is emblematic for that, as the surge in machine-driven industrialization in England went hand in hand with the decline if not dismantling of the more craft-based textile industries in India. Since then, we have witnessed many waves of deindustrialization, reindustrialization and economic transition around the world. These interconnected processes have been accompanied by often dramatic changes in employment opportunities and the world of work more generally. This conference seeks to explore processes that are often described as 'deindustrialization' from a global and historical perspective. It starts from the assumption that the term itself is problematic, as the economic processes leading to deindustrialization at the same time might include processes of reindustrialization. The term itself is also not used widely in different languages: in German 'Strukturwandel' is preferred, in Italian there 'ristrutturazione' and in French we often hear about 'modernisation'. The ambivalence of terminology points at the diversity of processes of industrial restructuring: they may be due to shifts of profit expectations between industrial sectors, changing modalities of international capital movements or to the transformation of labour processes and management strategies within a specific industrial sector. Each of these interconnected processes of crisis resolution can result in various forms of spatial relocation, and re-composition of the labour force.

Hence, we are asking how best to understand the processes of economic and spatial transition, their social and cultural consequences as well as their political fall-outs. We are interested in resistance to economic transitioning processes where industrial capital is leaving one place and moving to another. We would like to receive paper proposals that seek to recuperate the voices of those most affected by economic transitions, including workers and their communities, adjacent social strata directly affected by industrial restructuring, labour movements and urban as well as rural social movements.

Furthermore, we are keen to learn about how these transitions might have

changed traditional gender orders and how they might have opened up new ethnic divisions. Finally, we wish to pay special attention to how the memory of an industrial past and of specific trajectories of deindustrialization have influenced the postindustrial orders that have been emerging in many of the formerly industrial regions. Memory has been a powerful political resource and the construction of industrial heritage has not just been the nostalgic backdrop to a vibrant tourist industry but also the backbone of resistance towards an undermining of ways of life and of solidaristic collective cultures that characterized industrial societies. Memory has also traveled between old and new sites of de/industrialization, and can function as a resource informing endeavors to build new solidarities and community-building.

Processes of deindustrialization and reindustrialization need to be embedded in wider problems of capitalist development and the tensions between global markets and local conditions. If 'capital moves' (Jefferson Cowie), it might fix problems for capitalist development but it also causes problems for those attached to specific localities. Furthermore, processes of industrialization have often caused massive environmental problems, which are left to postindustrial futures once the industries have gone. Papers dealing with questions of political ecology and energy transition will therefore also be welcome.

The conference will attempt to shed light on processes of deindustrialization in a global framework paying attention to dramatic forms of deindustrialization and industrial restructuring in the global South as well as the global North including Eastern Europe. The history of developmentalist politics and their failure raises questions about the interrelatedness of developments in the global North and the global South. Focusing on localities and regions where industrial capital has left and/or has relocated to, the conference wishes to explore the spatial re-organization of capitalism and its conferences in regions and countries around the world. Transregional and comparative studies will be especially welcome. Undoubtedly, so far, studies of deindustrialization have tended to focus on the global North. The conference wishes to develop a de-centered global perspective by bringing in the global South and the interrelatedness of both spatial spheres. It also seeks to draw attention to less well-studied regions/sites affected by deindustrialization around the world. Finally, being aware that deindustrialization processes arguably go back a long way, this conference will be open to papers on the early modern period as well.

Deindustrialization studies has been strongly transdisciplinary and the conference would invite contributions not just from historians but from a range of different disciplines, including the social sciences, geography, anthropology, memory studies, social movement studies and others who have engaged with the types of economic transitions discussed above.

## **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 Laurin Blecha: [conference@ith.or.at](mailto:conference@ith.or.at)

## **CONFERENCE PUBLICATION**

As a rule (i.e. with very few exceptions) the ITH publishes 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 2023
Notification of acceptance:	28 February 2023
Full papers or presentation version:	15 August 2023

## **PREPARATORY GROUP**

Ravi Ahuja, University Göttingen  
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Eszter Bartha, Hannah Arendt Institute, Dresden  
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Therese Garstenauer, ITH, Vienna  
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## **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 organisations 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/>