



International Conference of Labour and Social History

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

AK
Oberösterreich

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**INSTITUT
FÜR HISTORISCHE
SOZIALFORSCHUNG**

**Friedrich
Ebert**
Stiftung



österreichische gesellschaft
für

politische bildung

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PROGRAMME (Version: 18.06.26)

Working nature – exploring intersections of labour history and political ecology

17–19 September 2026

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

Conference Languages: English – German

The 61st 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.

Preparatory Group

Marcel van der Linden (Amsterdam), **David Mayer** (Vienna), **On Barak** (Tel Aviv), **Therese Garstener** (Vienna), **Laurin Blecha** (Vienna).

Objectives

The bundle of human-made ecological crises has reached a point where most earth scientist see an actual breaching of ecological thresholds, not only in relation to climate change but also six of nine processes for which “planetary boundaries” have been defined. In this context, the interdisciplinary field of political ecology (which dates to at least the 1970s) has experienced a spectacular boom. In a certain sense, it has become *the* interdisciplinary critical social science of our days, a field in which both academic and political concerns converge. In the English-speaking world, political ecology has proved to be strongly inflected by historical reasoning, with several authors highlighting the entanglements between material extraction, energy carriers (particularly fossil ones), ecological over-use, capitalist economic development, and exploitation.

While the history of work and labour relations have a place in these studies, many commentators have noticed an ongoing non-communication between labour history and political ecology. Despite such (self-)critical assessments, the last decades already *have* seen numerous instances scholarship at the intersection of “labour” and “environmental history” as well as “political ecology”. It thus seems both timely and necessary to bring global labour history and historical political ecology into a more structured and fruitful dialogue, to assess existing research at the intersection of both and to explore further avenues of research. While open to a broad spectrum of topics and approaches – from the carbon nexus to agrarian ecologies, from toxic through contested to multispecies labour –, this conference will insist on “labour” as one major category of differentiation in past and current ecological predicaments.



Thursday, 17 September 2026

Registration at the venue begins at **15:00**

- 13.30–15.30 Meeting of the ITH Board and International Scientific Committee
- 15.30–16.00 Break
- 16.00–17.00 General Assembly of the ITH
- 17.30–18.00 **Conference Opening**
Therese Garstenauer, ITH President
TBA, Chamber of Labour of Upper Austria
TBA, City of Linz
- 18.00–19.30 **Keynote lecture**
Jason Moore (Binghamton University): *The Climate-Class Conjuncture, or, the Worldwide Class Struggle in the Web of Life: Climate and Class on the 'Real Ground of History'*
- 19.30–21.00 **Welcome Reception by the Mayor of Linz**

Friday, 18 September 2026

- 09.00–11.00 **Panel I: Carbon Nexus**
Chair and comment: On Barak
- Azar Kafae (University of Michigan): *Oil extraction and agrarian enclosure – tribe and British Petroleum in southern Iran 1900–1950*
 - Joe Rigby (University of Chester): *Cumbrian coal and capitalist world-ecology: social and ecological frictions through changing commodity regimes*
 - Jary Koch (Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History in Potsdam): *The Everyday Life of Material Transformation: Labour and Ecology in the West German Chemical Industry, 1960s to 1980s*
 - Limin Teh (Leiden University): *Between Labor Process and Socionature: Workplace, Mechanization, and Coal Mining in Japanese Manchuria*
- 11.00–11.15 Coffee Break
- 11.15–13.45 **Panel II: Agrarian Ecologies**
Chair and comment: Marcel van der Linden
- Kartika Natalia Manurung (University of Bonn): *Spatialised Labour Regimes in Indonesian Palm Oil Plantations*
 - John Emrys Morgan & Nye Merrill-Glover (both University of Bristol): *Bodily ecologies in early modern wetlands*
 - Harm Zwarts (University of Groningen): *Who Controls the Seed? Farmers, Diversity Loss, and Unequal Power Relations in Dutch Agriculture c. 1930–1990*
 - Matan Kaminer and Ayan Meer (both Queen Mary University London): *Climate migration: Deconstructing a trope and reconstructing a politics*



- Tomasz Kargol (Jagiellonian University, Krakow): *Political ecology and history of labour in Habsburg Galicia and southern Poland in the 19th and 20th century (up to 1939) on the example of hydrotechnical construction and melioration*

13.45–15.00 Lunch

15.00–17.00 **Panel III: Toxic Labour**

Chair and comment: David Mayer

- Clément Fontanarava (Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne): *Working Oil: An Environmental History of Labor at La Mède Refinery, France, 1934–1940*
- Bastien Cabot (Sciences Po): *A variety of 'labour environmentalism'? Facing industrial hazards in interwar Parisian suburbs*
- Alex Nagel (Independent Researcher, Amsterdam): *Rebelling against the Environment and Equality: Political Ecology and Industrial Labor Resistance in the 1970s United States*
- Anusha Sundar (Columbia University): *Making the Body Speak: Labour and Crisis in Madras, 1861–1874*

17.00–17.15 Coffee Break

17.15–18.45 **Panel IV: Contested Transitions**

Chair and comment: Therese Garstenauer

- Felix Wagenitz (University of Vienna): *Politicising Production: Trade Union Opposition, Conversion Conflicts, and Workplace Power in the German Automobile Industry, 1970–1990*
- Girigan Gabriel (Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu, Romania): *Dangerous and Precarious Forestry Labour in the Carpathian Mountains*
- Bridget Kenny and Simon Gush (both at University of the Witwatersrand): *Of mine dumps, vegetables and container mountains: City Deep as space of capital, labour and nature in Johannesburg, South Africa*

18.45–19.30 Dinner

19.30–20.30 **Special Event**

TBA

Invited guests:

Aaron Niederman, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation

Lukas Oberndorfer, Chamber of Labour of Vienna

Moderation: **David Mayer**

Saturday, 19 September 2026

09.00–11.00 **Panel V: Multispecies Labour**

Chair and comment: Ernst Langthaler

- Juri Auderset (University of Bern): *Knowing Nature Through Animal Work: Agroecological Workscapes and Contested Epistemologies of Laboring Animals in Switzerland, 1820s–1940s*



- Jelena Micić (Academy of Fine Arts Vienna): *Working Nature in the Non-Aligned World: Animals, Labour, and Visual Surplus at the Leda Footwear and Plastics Industry*
- Jadon Nisly-Goretzki (University of Kassel): *Working Cows, Their Peasants, and the River Meadows that Fed Them*
- Sanjay K. Paul (Harvard University): *Yankee Pests: The 1864 "Army Worm" Infestation and the Ecology of Emancipation in the Mississippi Valley*

11.00–11.15 Coffee Break

11.15–13.15 **Panel VI: Embodied Ecologies**

Chair and comment: Susan Zimmermann

- Muhammed Junaid (University of Hyderabad): *Ecologies of martiality: Labour, Political Ecology and making of Mappila soldiers in Colonial South Asia, 1896–1907*
- Adrian A. Smith (York University): *Heat and Reigns of Terror: Agricultural Labour Regimes and Human-Planetary Boundaries*
- Anna Sailer (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen): *The rise and fall of forest workers' cooperatives in post-colonial India, 1950s–1970s*
- Marten Dondrop (Harvard University): *Environmental risk and the comparability of labor: Colonial transport workers as risk-managers, c.1750–1850*

13.15–14.30 Lunch

14.30–14.50 **Final Remarks**

On Barak (Tel Aviv) and Ernst Langthaler (Linz)

14.50–15.30 **Concluding Debate**

Moderation: Marcel van der Linden, David Mayer, and On Barak