



International Conference of Labour and Social History

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

**FRIEDRICH
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österreichische gesellschaft
für **politische bildung**



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PROGRAMME (Version: 28.06.24)

'Worlds of Digital Labour'

26-28 September 2024

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

Conference Languages: English – German

The 59th 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 Austrian Society for Political Education, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and the City of Linz.

Preparatory Group

Gleb Albert (University of Lucerne), **Laurin Blecha** (ITH, Vienna), **Julia Gül Erdogan** (TU Berlin), **Therese Garstenauer** (ITH, Vienna), **Michael Homberg** (Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam), **Stefan Müller** (Friedrich Ebert Foundation)

Objectives

The pitfalls of platform economies, the struggles for unionisation in digital entertainment companies, outsourcing and exploitation in social media enterprises, fragile global commodity chains in hardware production: Topics of labour and digital industries are prominent in today's news headlines. These themes, however, have a history that goes back several decades. Studying industrial relations at the dawn of computing, the struggles over automation and digitization, and the emergence of new forms of work can provide us with a better understanding of digital labour relations and struggles.

The 2024 ITH conference addresses the role of industrial relations, labour struggles and knowledge regimes in the history of computing and IT - both in computer-related industries (hardware and software) and the IT services sector shaping the "old", established industries. Covering the time frame between the establishment of the commercial computer industry in the post-war era through the breakthrough of home and personal computing in the late 1970s until the commodification of digital communication in the 1990s, and aiming at a global perspective, we address questions that are crucial for the history and present of labour and digitization. What visions of future work were propelled by the introduction of computers, and how were these visions perceived by the workforce? Which aspects of pre-digital labour shaped the conception of digital work? What was the effect of

informal DIY cultures and counter-cultural ethics on structures and practices of digital labour? How were IT workers (programmers, systems analysts or operators) perceived and how did they perceive themselves within traditional structures of labour organising? To what extent did structural inequalities, especially questions of race, class and gender, come to the fore? How did unions deal with the threats (and chances) of automation and digitization? What new forms of work relations, vocational education and labour organising sprung up in newly formed digital industries such as microchip manufacturing, software fabrication or computer games production? How did the global division of labour manifest itself in the computing and IT industries over decades? How did the various pathways into the digital age differ around the globe, especially when comparing developments in the United States and Western Europe with those in state socialist countries and the countries of the Global South? What effects did the introduction of personal computing have on work relations, the atomisation of the labour force, as well as the images and narratives of small-scale entrepreneurship? How did the introduction of mobile technologies change both the digital industries and broader work relations yet again?

Thursday, 26 September 2024

Registration of participants 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
Thomas Gegenhuber, City of Linz
- 18.00 - 19.30 **Keynote lecture**
Mar Hicks (University of Virginia): *Rethinking Histories of Labour and Computing*
- 19.30 - 21.00 **Welcome Reception by the Major of Linz**

Friday, 27 September 2024

- 9.00 - 10.30 **Opening lecture**
Jamie Woodcock (Kings College London): *Game Worker Solidarity: mapping collective action in the games industry*
- 10.30 - 10.45 Coffee Break
- 10.45 - 11.45 **Panel I: Knowledge Networks in the Digital Age**
Chair and comment: Stefan Müller
- Ilse Lenz (Ruhr University Bochum): *Exclusions and inclusions by gender and geopolitical inequalities in the transition to digitalisation: feminist knowledge production and practices*
 - Eugene Sensenig (Lebanese Emigration Research Center, Zouk Mikael): *Globally Leveraging Lebanon – Digital Networks*
- 12.00 - 13.30 Lunch

- 13.30 - 14.30 **Panel II: "Self-Made" Entrepreneurship and Home Computing**
Chair and comment: Gleb Albert
- Jaroslav Svelch (Charles University Prague): *Paramilitary start-ups: Programming labor and entrepreneurial ambitions in 1980s Czechoslovak hobby computer clubs*
 - Patryk Wasiak (Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw): *Teenage bedroom coders and child labor in the software industry in the 8-bit era*
- 14.30 - 16.00 **Panel III: Office Work and the Rise of the "Service Industry"**
Chair and comment: Julia Gül Erdogan
- Anna Baumann (University of Berne): *Personal computers, screen work and gendered corporality: telework in the 1980's.*
 - Christiane Berth (University of Graz): *Gender, technology, and communication: Computerized office work in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s*
 - Bridget Kenny (University of the Witwatersrand): *Computing racial capitalism: National progress, computer technology and office work in South Africa, 1950 - 1975*
- 16.00 - 16.15 Coffee Break
- 16.15 - 17.45 **Panel IV: Digital Literacy: Computer Education and Training for the "Future"**
Chair and comment: Michael Homberg
- Tim Schinschick (Georg-Eckert-Institut Braunschweig): *Teaching the computerized tomorrow. Requirements for and training of teachers in computer education in Baden-Württemberg in the 1980s*
 - Anna Katharina Osterlow (Centre d'histoire de Sciences Po): *Training the computer literate worker of the future: Perspectives from two transnational computer projects in Senegal and Nigeria, 1964-1984*
 - Walpurga Friedl & Ernst Langthaler (JKU Linz): *Negotiating Digitization: Narratives of Digital Labour in Austrian Employees' and Employers' Magazines, 1970-2020*
- 18.00 - 19.30 Dinner
- 19.30 - 20.30 **Public evening event (in German)**
TBA
- Invited guests:
TBA
- Moderation: **Therese Garstenauer**

Saturday, 28 September 2024

9.00 - 11.00

Panel V: Automation dreams and fears: Computing and Programming in the 20th and 21st century

Chair and comment: Julia Gül Erdogan

- Timo Leimbach (Aarhus University): *A case for CASE – the dream and failure of automated software development*
- Denis Ljuljanovic (TU Darmstadt): *Cultures of Malfunction: The Evolving Narrative of Digitally Connected Factories (1980s-2011)*
- David Allan Grier (George Washington University): *Replacing Digital Labor*
- Michele Santoro (University of Rome): *Running by Machines? Automation, Labour Dynamics, and Institutional Reform at the National Institute of Social Insurance, 1948-1971*

11.00 - 11.15

Coffee Break

11.15 - 12.45

Panel VI: New challenges and old problems? “Digital Platforms”: Delivery & Transportation

Chair and comment: Laurin Blecha

- Simon Yin (Hefei University of Technology): *Ride-sharing and Labor Activism in China*
- Mohammad Tareq Hasan (University of Dhaka): *Working Without a Boss in Dhaka?: Affective Labor, Ratings, and Temporalities in Digital Platforms*
- Lucas Santos Souza (Fluminense Federal University): *Autonomy, control over work and the platformisation process in the delivery industry in Rio de Janeiro*

12.45 - 14.00

Lunch

14.00 - 15.00

Concluding Debate

Moderation: Gleb Albert, Julia Gül Erdogan, Michael Homberg, Stefan Müller