Heaps of work. The ways of labour history
by Kim Christian Priemel

Abstract
One of the success stories of twentieth century historiography, Labour History has reputedly been on a downward trajectory for the past 25 years, mirroring the oft-commented demise of organised labour in 'old' industrial societies such as the UK and Germany. However, despite a great number of academic obituaries, labour history as a field of research is actually thriving. Various recent theoretical approaches and conceptual 'turns' have reinvigorated historians' interest in work and working people. This has led to a much more diverse field which stretches from local shop-floor studies to issues of transnational labour policies and from the de/construction of 'working-class culture' to the rise and fall of social engineering. Established themes of labour history are frequently covered in studies which do not sport the discipline's label and whose authors would not brand themselves labour historians. While the plurality of approaches and subjects greatly enhances labour history's intellectual appeal and reintegrates the field into larger historiographical debates, the discipline is losing both material and institutional coherence. As a result, traditional, yet essential research on trade union organisation, biographies, etc. is now marginalized.

Zusammenfassung

Nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg zählte die Arbeiter- und Arbeiterbewegungsgeschichte, partiell auch die Geschichte der Arbeit, zu den erfolgreichsten historischen Teildisziplinen. Mit dem seit den 1980er-Jahren dominierenden Diskurs über das Ende von Arbeitsgesellschaft und Arbeiterklasse wurde jedoch auch der Arbeitergeschichte die Totenglocke geläutet. Ungeachtet einer Vielzahl akademischer Nachrufe zeigt der folgende Forschungsbericht über die britische und deutsche Literatur, dass das Feld Labour History *(ein vergleichbar umfassender Begriff fehlt im Deutschen) überaus lebhaft ist. Die vielfältigen Theorien- und Methodendebatten der zurückliegenden Jahre haben der historischen Beschäftigung mit Arbeit und Arbeitenden spürbar neues Leben eingehaucht und zu einer thematisch wie konzeptionell breiten Forschungslandschaft geführt, die heute von ethnographischen Betriebsstudien bis zu transnationaler Arbeitspolitik ebenso reicht wie von der kulturalistischen Dekonstruktion der 'Arbeiterklasse' bis zu Arbeit als Gegenstand von Verwissenschaftlichungsprozessen. Bewährte Themen der Arbeits- und Arbeitergeschichte finden sich heute in Darstellungen, die kein entsprechendes Etikett tragen und aus der Feder von Autor/innen, die sich nicht als Arbeiterhistoriker/innen verstehen. Während also einerseits Themen" , Theorien- und Methodenpluralismus zum intellektuellen Reiz und zur Anschlussfähigkeit des Forschungsfeldes beitragen, verliert die Disziplin inhaltlich und institutionell an Kohärenz und dies um den Preis, dass traditionelle, empirisch essentielle Organisationsgeschichten und Biographien ins historiographische Abseits gedrängt werden.*

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I. A Lazarus story? Labour history between loss and renewal

„British labor history is one of the success stories of recent historical scholarship", Jeffrey Cox declared in 1986.[1] Reviewing now classical studies such as Eric Hobsbawm's *Workers* and Gareth Stedman-Jones' *Languages of Class*, Cox was deeply impressed by the way the discipline had transformed from dull organisational chronicles to a fair approximation of total history, taking its cues from the social sciences and Cultural Studies.[2] Yet, despite these successes Cox also detected a „sense of crisis" among labour historians, either because they believed that the „forward march of labour" had been halted (Hobsbawm)[3], or because they professed doubts as to whether or not there had ever been a distinct, unified social force as implied by the concept of 'the labour movement' (Stedman Jones).[4]

Three decades later the sense of crisis has assumed the shape of a protracted obituary. Rarely has a discipline been buried so often and with such vigour as has labour history. The number of books and articles announcing the end of labour, the waning days of labour history or indeed both, is legion. Since the 1980s, many a sociologist – pace Ralf Dahrendorf, Dominique Méda, Jeremy Rifkin – has diagnosed the fading of work as the key category of industrial economies, the cornerstone of individual biographies and the fabric of modern society[5], and concomitantly the passing of the labour movement as a significant social and political agent.[6] Historians have been slower, yet eager to pick up the thread: if you can no longer make a living (or at least a reputation) of labour and its accomplishments you might as well by studying its demise. So are labour historians the belated winners in a game of 'deindustrialisation' in which the precarious and the unemployed, the dwindling trade unions and diminished, hapless social democrats easily outnumber the few significant shareholders and their eponymous values?

The number of articles, monographs, and edited volumes whose titles sound like funeral marches would suggest that this is the case – at first sight.[7] Yet, the frequently added question marks indicate that most academics are not inclined to bid farewell to their subject. When the *Society for the Study of Labour History*, in 1997, inquired if there was „a future for labour history", the answers were rather uniformly in the affirmative.[8] Indeed, many if not all contributions lamenting the state of the art offer ideas and suggestions how to modernise and reinvigorate labour history (which is not all that surprising given that most authors have personal and professional stakes in the well-being of their discipline). Some of the field's luminaries emphatically denied the end of either labour or its historiography: while Hobsbawm cautioned against confusing a social phenomenon (work/the working class) with a political project (the labour movement), the late Klaus Tenfelde dismissed the debate as „utter nonsense".[9] More soberly,

[1] Jeffrey Cox, Labor History and the Labor Movement, in: Journal of British Studies 25 (1986), pp. 233-241.

[2] Eric Hobsbawm, Workers: Worlds of Labor, New York 1984; Gareth Stedman-Jones, Languages of Class. Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982, Cambridge 1983.

[3] Eric Hobsbawm, The Forward March of Labour Halted?, in: Marxism Today 22 (1978), no. 9, pp. 279-286.

[4] Cox, Labour History, p. 233; Stedman-Jones, Languages, p. 243.

[5] Ralf Dahrendorf, Im Entschwinden der Arbeitsgesellschaft. Wandlungen in der sozialen Konstruktion des menschlichen Lebens, in: Merkur 34 (1980), pp. 749-760; see also his continuation of Hannah Arendt's reflections in: Wenn der Arbeitsgesellschaft die Arbeit ausgeht, in: Krise der Arbeitsgesellschaft? Verhandlungen des 21. Deutschen Soziologentages in Bamberg 1982, Joachim Matthes (ed.), Frankfurt am Main 1982, pp. 25-37; Dominique Méda, Le travail. Une valeur en voie de disparition, 2nd edt. Paris 1998; Jeremy Rifkin, The End of Work, New York 1995. The late Robert Castel, however, has pointed to the resurgence of 'labour' and 'work ethic' in public discourse; La montée des incertitudes. Travail, protections, statut de l'individu, Paris 2009.

[6] Theo Pirker, Vom Ende der Arbeiterbewegung, in: Rolf Ebbinghausen / Friedrich Tiemann (eds.), Das Ende der Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland? Ein Diskussionsband zum sechzigsten Geburtstag von Theo Pirker, Opladen 1984, pp. 39-51; André Gorz, Abschied vom Proletariat. Jenseits des Sozialismus, Frankfurt am Main 1980.

[7] Cf. Marcel van der Linden, The End of Labour History? Cambridge 1994; Dietmar Süß, A scheene Leich? Stand und Perspektiven der westdeutschen Arbeitergeschichte nach 1945, in: Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für Soziale Bewegungen 34 (2005), pp. 51-76.

[8] Editorial: Is there a future for labour history?, in: Labour History Review (LHR) 62 (1997), pp. 253-59.

[9] Eric Hobsbawm, Das Jahrhundert der Arbeiterbewegung, in: Utopie kreativ 109/110 (1999), pp. 7-18, at 9f. Klaus Tenfelde, [Comment], in: Dieter Dowe (ed.), Demokratischer

Jürgen Kocka has recently asked what else might replace 'work' as the pillar of modern societies.[10]

Yet, the sense of crisis lingers on as recent overviews of labour historiography illustrate: more with a sorrowful eye to the discipline's institutional stability than its intellectual quality and doubtful as to the political impetus labour history might still have.[11] To some extent this difference in perception may be explained in generational terms. Hobsbawm – together with the likes of E.P. Thompson and Royden Harrison in Britain, Helga Grebing and Gerhard A. Ritter in West Germany, or David Brody, Herbert Gutman and David Montgomery in the United States – was instrumental in transforming traditional, largely organisation-minded labour history into a 'New Labour History' which was in accord with the theoretically informed 'New Social History' that dominated much of European and North American historiography in the post-war decades. Research institutions and journals specialising in labour history flowered from the early 1960s to the mid-1980s[12], the environment in which Kocka, Tenfelde, et al. started and advanced their careers.[13] Since the 1990s, however, the labour history

Sozialismus in Europa seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, Bonn 2001, p. 69.

[10] Jürgen Kocka, Work as Problem in European History, in: Jürgen Kocka (ed.), Work in a Modern Society. The German Historical Experience in Comparative Perspective, Oxford 2010, pp. 1-15. But cf. Kocka's previous, longer version of the same article which is more forthright in asserting the continuing significance of labour as the key structuring device of society: Jürgen Kocka, Mehr Last als Lust. Arbeit und Arbeitsgesellschaft in der europäischen Geschichte, in: Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte (2005), 2, pp. 185-206.

[11] Joan Allen / Alan Campbell / John McIlroy (eds.), Histories of Labour. National and International Perspectives, Pontypool 2010. For the diagnosis of institutional decline see John McIlroy, Waving or drowning? British labor history in troubled waters, in: Labor History 53 (2012), pp. 91-119.

[12] *Past and Present*, inspired by the famous *Annales* (1929), was established in 1952, followed by the US *Labor Historian's Bulletin* two years later (renamed *Labor History* in 1960), the Amsterdam-based *International Review of Social History* (IISH) in 1956, the *Labour History Review* (LHR) in 1960 and the *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* (AfS) in 1961. At the tail end came *International Labor and Working-Class History* (ILWCH, 1972), *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* (1975) and the *Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für Soziale Bewegungen* (1982).

[13] See their respective, career-spanning anthologies: Jürgen Kocka, Arbeiten an der

boom has been ebbing away, with several journals like *Past & Present*, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* or the *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* broadening their scope while limiting the available space for studies in social and labour history, and with fewer chairs and research positions dedicated to labour history. The present review essay does not set out to evaluate the legitimacy of such worries but enquires into the intellectual state of the art: what does labour history in the new millennium look like, and what does it offer to scholars of contemporary history? In what shapes and flavours does labour history come these days, and how has it adapted to the theoretical challenges posed by various historiographical approaches and trends over the past two decades?

There are different ways of tackling such a review. One option is to distinguish between different theoretical and/or methodological approaches, running the whole gamut from seasoned concepts such as *Alltagsgeschichte*[14] and gender history[15] to more recent suggestions such as the history of emotions[16] and transnational history, taking various (linguistic, cultural, performative, etc.) turns along the way. Another approach might categorise the monographs, collections,

Geschichte. Gesellschaftlicher Wandel im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, Göttingen 2011, and Klaus Tenfelde, Arbeiter, Bürger, Städte. Zur Sozialgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, Göttingen 2012.

[14] Alf Lüdtke, Eigen-Sinn. Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus, Hamburg 1993.

[15] For both conceptual outlines and empirical case studies cf. the selection of Karin Hausen's articles in: Karin Hausen, Geschlechtergeschichte als Gesellschaftsgeschichte, Göttingen 2012. The „hesitant process of integrating gender history into the history of work and the labour movement" (Karin Hausen, Work in Gender, Gender in Work: The German Case in Comparative Perspective, in: Kocka, Work, pp. 73-92, at p. 87) is still very much work-in-progress. Gender-sensitive perspectives are mostly applied by female historians with some notable exceptions: Technological Change and Gender in the Labour Policies of British Retail Banks, 1945-1970, in: Alan Booth / Joseph Melling (eds.), Managing the Modern Workplace. Productivity, Politics and Workplace Culture in Postwar Britain, Aldershot 2008, pp. 101-123, or Karsten Uhl, Die Geschlechterordnung der Fabrik. Arbeitswissenschaftliche Entwürfe von Rationalisierung und Humanisierung 1900-1970, in: Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften 21 (2010), pp. 93-117, and, of course, Stefan Bajohr, Die Hälfte der Fabrik. Geschichte der Frauenarbeit in Deutschland 1914 bis 1945, 2nd edt. Marburg 1984.

[16] Christian Koller, „Es ist zum Heulen". Emotionshistorische Zugänge zur Kulturgeschichte des Streikens, in: Geschichte und Gesellschaft 36 (2010), pp. 66-92, 67-71.

and journal articles according to their analytical focus, distinguishing between labour movement politics, investigations of working-class milieus, ethnographic studies of work practices, etc. However, such taxonomies require a great degree of rigorousness, from both the reviewed authors and the reviewer. The fact that historians dominate on both sides does not exactly recommend such an endeavour. Therefore the aim of the present essay is far more modest. It sets out to investigate where labour history is to be found these days, how it is branded, and in which contexts its results are discussed. Exploring a wide array of studies the review will look out for a tentative answer to the question whether or not the discipline is now deceased or, rather, if it is in a process of renewal by transcending its previous mode of existence.

Three caveats are in place: (a) in terms of periodisation, the review focuses on studies on the latter half of the twentieth century, with a particular interest in the decades following the *Trente glorieuses* of reconstruction, perpetual growth, and welfare state expansion[17]; (b) the review is basically confined to British and (West) German research, owing as much to the author's limited languages skills as to the comparative potential of both historiographies; (c) the reviewed studies – for pragmatic reasons mostly monographs – largely date from 2000 or later. That said, I have taken the liberty of ignoring all three limitations when I felt that studies dealing with earlier periods or other countries or works slightly more dated have been particularly influential – or should have been. Hopefully, the review benefits from these excursions. Either way, this essay lays no claim to comprehensiveness

[17] The strong link between periodisation issues and labour history is notable in collections such as: Alan Campbell / Nina Fishman / John McIlroy (eds.), The Post-War Compromise: British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics, 1945-64, Monmouth 2007; Alan Campbell / Nina Fishman / John McIlroy (eds.), The High Tide of British Trade Unionism. Trade Unions and Industrial Politics, 1964-79, Monmouth: Merlin Press 2007; Knud Andresen / Ursula Bitzegeio / Jürgen Mittag (Eds.), „Nach dem Strukturbruch"? Kontinuität und Wandel von Arbeitsbeziehungen und Arbeitswelt(en) seit den 1970er-Jahren, Bonn 2011, and Winfried Süß / Dietmar Süß, Zeitgeschichte der Arbeit: Beobachtungen und Perspektiven, in: ibid., pp. 345-365.

although I hope to offer at least some degree of representativeness.

II. Of workers and where to find them

Labour movement histories

Until the advent of new social history, labour history was dominated by institutional or, more precisely, organisational histories of political parties, trade unions, and self-help and self-improvement associations (fraternal societies, cooperatives, et al.). Biographies of politicians and trade union leaders also fall into this category. Such studies still appear as commissioned, commemorative works, cluster around anniversaries, or come as authoritative multi-volume editions.[18] While research on the nineteenth century – massive in numbers and impressive in scope as this was the main playing field during the heyday of labour historiography – usually takes an integrated view of the three columns of the labour movement[19], recent accounts draw a firmer line between trade unionism, socialist/social democratic parties and self-help institutions. Even beyond the largely celebratory genre[20],

[18] In the German case, this is the multi-volume project *Geschichte der Arbeiter und der Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland seit dem Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts*, which is still in progress. Two volumes on the GDR by Christoph Kleßmann and Peter Hübner have come out while publication of the corresponding studies on the FRG has yet to be scheduled. There is also the annually published *Bibliographie zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, Bibliothek der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (ed.), Bonn 1976ff.

[19] Among the early studies were Carl E. Schorske, German Social Democracy, 1905-1917. The Development of the Great Schism, Cambridge, MA 1955, and Gerhard A. Ritter, Die Arbeiterbewegung im Wilhelminischen Reich. Die Sozialdemokratische Partei und die Freien Gewerkschaften 1890-1900, Berlin 1959; see also his Arbeiter, Arbeiterbewegung und soziale Ideen in Deutschland. Beiträge zur Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, München 1996. Among the more recent works see in particular Thomas Welskopp, Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie vom Vormärz bis zum Sozialistengesetz, Bonn 2000.

[20] Harry Harmer (ed.), The Longman companion to the Labour Party, 1900-1998, London 1999; Keith Laybourn, A Century of Labour. A History of the Labour Party 1900-2000; the standard work is Henry Pelling / Alastair J. Reid, A Short History of the Labour Party, 12th edt. Basingstoke 2005. For the SPD's 150th birthday see Anja Kruke / Meik Woyke (eds.), Deutsche Sozialdemokratie in Bewegung, 1848–1863–2013, Bonn 2012, as well as the new website (http://www.geschichte-der-sozialdemokratie.de/) which includes information on the general labour movement and trade unionism. The

histories e.g. of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) tend to side-line trade unions. Alex Kuhn's brief overview of the German labour movement defines its subject as essentially political, not economic, therefore by and large ignores workers and their associations[21], and ends with the SPD's Godesberg turn from socialism. Highly conservative in its narrative structure and ignorant of much recent research, Kuhn chooses a teleological perspective in which the labour movement has „fulfilled its historical task" – evidently assigned by the abstract forces of class structure – of liberating its constituency from misery and oppression and accomplishing what German bourgeoisie had failed to do: a stable democracy.[22] Kuhn's account, which might qualify as retro if it were less simplistic, fades out where Franz Walter's „biography" of the SPD sets in. Walter, a prominent protagonist in German *Parteienforschung*, quickly moves from the early years of the SPD as a social movement to its post-1945 career as a key parliamentary player. Focusing on the party's higher echelons, other members of the labour movement, including trade unions, hardly figure at all, begging the question if Walter implicitly shares Kuhn's conception that the 'Bonn republic' lacked any labour movement worth speaking of.[23] Another essay of Walter's suggests that the twentieth century saw the emancipation of social democratic values from the working

'official' historical series is Dieter Dowe (ed.), Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie nach 1945, three volumes of which have been published, taking the SPD to 1982. In France, a full four volumes came out for the Parti Socialiste's 100th anniversary in 2005: Alain Bergougnioux (ed.), Des poings et des roses. Le siècle des socialistes, Paris 2005; Claude Estier, Un combat centenaire, 1905-2005. Histoire des socialistes français, Paris 2005; Louis Mexandeau, Histoire du parti socialiste 1905-2005, Paris 2005; Pierre Bezbakh, Histoire du socialisme français, Paris 2005 (a German translation was published in 2009). – A substantive history of the post-war communist parties in the FRG is a lacuna; for Britain see James Eaden / David Renton, The Communist Party of Great Britain Since 1920, Basingstoke 2002, and John McIlroy's chapters on the Communist Party and Trotskyism vis-à-vis the trade unions in: Campbell / Fishman / McIlroy, High Tide, pp. 216-258 and 259-296.

[21] Cf. Stefan Berger, Social Democracy and the Working Class in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany, Harlow 2000, p. 8.

[22] Alex Kuhn, Die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung, Stuttgart 2004, quote at p. 11.

[23] Franz Walter, Die SPD. Biographie einer Partei, Reinbek 2009.

class as a social formation. More thought-provoking than the party chronicles, the essay, however, also illustrates the pitfalls of interdisciplinary research: Walter's reasons in favour of a caesura around 1973 are based on a sample of recent historical publications which in turn draw heavily on contemporary works from the social sciences, thereby resulting in a circular argumentation.[24]

A more integrated, if still predominantly party-political account is offered by the doyen of German social democracy's history, Helga Grebing. Her revised and updated *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* not only takes the story to the 21st century but also links the analysis of the SPD's downward trajectory to that of the trade unions. Her argument that in times of shrinking economic resources class conflict was internalised by labour movement institutions, i.e. contended between privileged and non-privileged employees pertains to both party and unions, and is supported by Dennie Nijhuis' claim that the limits to redistribution were defined by the limitations of union solidarity with the unemployed.[25]

Another important observation of Grebing's is the loss of influence suffered by trade unions during the SPD's long spells in opposition and the party's efforts to embrace market capitalism in the 1990s.[26] Here, the parallels to the British case are striking – as are the differences to France with its politically sectarian and organisationally weak trade unions, or the US where unions do not have a natural ally comparable to Labour or SPD[27] –, although the intensity is significantly

[24] Franz Walter, Vorwärts oder abwärts? Zur Transformation der Sozialdemokratie, Berlin 2010.

[25] Helga Grebing, Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung. Von der Revolution 1848 bis ins 21. Jahrhundert, Berlin 2007, pp. 207f.; Dennie Oude Nijhuis, Explaining British voluntarism, in: Labor History 52 (2011), pp. 373-398. See also Castel's observation that the logic of class antagonism has been replaced by inter-professional competition; Castel, Montée, p. 18.

[26] Ibid., pp. 209, 243-246; cf. the semantic observation by Berger, Social Democracy, p. 207, that SPD discourse referred to workers as „'the socially weak"' by the late 1970s.

[27] Cf. Dominique Andolfatto / Dominique Labbé, Histoire des syndicats (1906-2006), Paris 2006. For the extent to which trade unions have been able to lobby for welfare state politics by working through the Democratic Party see Tracy Roof, American Labor,

stronger in the British arena. Owing to the Trades Union Counsel's (TUC) role in establishing the Labour Party and the block vote the unions held at party conventions until the early 1990s, relations between Labour and TUC are a recurring theme in histories of either organisation. Traditionally, a double narrative dominates which characterises party-union relations in terms of „basic ambiguity"[28]: while trade unions never determined government policies when Labour was in power, they contributed decisively to their downfall, notably during the notorious Winter of Discontent in 1978-9.[29] Some historians call this plot into question with John McIlroy and Alan Campbell arguing for a double readjustment, crediting both government and employers with far greater agency and appreciating union power as „restricted, subordinate and dispersed."[30]

If histories of the social democratic parties frequently show remarkably little overlap with trade union history, the latter genre is characterised by a strong top-down bias. Ever since the Webbs' pioneering *History of Trade Unionism* (1894) historians, economists, and sociologists have tried their hand at comprehensive accounts. Lately overviews and synopses are outnumbering histories of individual trade unions in the UK and Germany just as much as in the US and France.[31] Several common features connect the different volumes,

Congress, and the Welfare State, 1935-2010, Baltimore 2011.

[28] David Howell, 'Shut Your Gob!': Trade Unions and the Labour Party, 1954-64, in: Campbell / Fishman / McIlroy, Compromise, pp. 117-144, 132.

[29] Keith Middlemas, Politics in Industrial Society. The experience of the British system since 1911, London 1979. Cf. Andrew Thorpe, The Labour Party and the Trade Unions, in: High Tide, pp. 133-150.

[30] John McIlroy / Alan Campbell, The High Tide of Trade Unionism: Mapping Industrial Politics, 1964-79, in: Campbell / Fishman / McIlroy, High Tide, pp. 93-130, at 101. The controversy remains unresolved as the preface to the 2007 paperback edition (ibid., pp. xv-xl, at p. xvii) shows which refutes criticism from Kenneth Morgan and in turn argues that any interpretation should depart not from the „pathology or the death wish of responsible trade union leaders but with analysis rooted in the structural situation constraining the actors of 1978-9 and the interplay of agency with context."

[31] *UK*: W. Hamish Fraser, A History of British Trade Unionism, 1700-1998, Macmillan 1999; Aldcroft / Oliver, Trade Unions; Chris Wrigley, British Trade Unions Since 1933, Cambridge 2002; Taylor, TUC; Alastair Reid, United We Stand. A History of Britain's

notably the parallels in periodization which distinguish between an immediate post-war era of reconstruction, the following years of accord or compromise in the 1950s, the „zenith"[32] , „high tide"[33], or „apogée"[34] of trade union influence from the 1960s and 1970s, and a prolonged downward trajectory since the 1980s.[35] These grand narratives are further linked by the major themes they cover, such as welfare state politics, trade union support for Keynesian economics, the rise of neo-liberalism, national deindustrialisation and global integration. Data on membership – dwindling and slowly turning more female and ethnically diverse[36] – and strike activity is supplemented by accounts

Trade Unions, London 2005; for the period up to the 1950s see Hugh A. Clegg / Alan Fox / A. F. Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions since 1889, 3 Vols., Oxford 1964-94. *US*: Glenn Perusek / Ken Worcester (eds.), Trade Union Politics. American Unions and Economic Change 1960s-1990s. Atlantic Highlands 1995; Le Blanc, Short History; Nelson Lichtenstein, State of the Union. A Century of American Labor, Princeton 2002; Steve Babson. The Unfinished Struggle, Steve Babson. The Unfinished Struggle. Turning Points in American Labor, 1877-present, Lanham 1999; Philip Yale Nicholson, Labor's Story in the United States, Philadelphia 2004 (a German translation has come out with Vorwärts); Foster Rhea Dulles / Melvyn Dubofsky, Labor in America: A History, 8th edt. Wheeling 2010; *FRG*: Michael Schneider, Kleine Geschichte der Gewerkschaften. Ihre Entwicklung in Deutschland von den Anfängen bis heute, 2nd, rev. edt. Bonn 2000; Walter Müller-Jentsch, Gewerkschaften und Soziale Marktwirtschaft seit 1945, Stuttgart 2011; cf. Klaus Schönhoven. Die deutschen Gewerkschaften, Frankfurt am Main 1987; *France*: Andolfatto / Labbé, Histoire; Gérard da Silva, Histoire de la CGT-FO et de son union départementale de Paris 1895-2009, Paris 2009; René Mouriaux, Le Syndicalisme en France depuis 1945, 3nd edt. Paris, 2004. The ongoing German project, Erich Matthias / Dieter Dowe / Klaus Schönhoven, et al (eds.), Quellen zur Geschichte der deutschen Gewerkschaftsbewegung im 20. Jahrhundert, 16 vols., Köln / Frankfurt am Main / Bonn, 1985-2013, now stretching up to the 1970s, seems unparalleled in scale or scope.

[32] Derek H. Aldcroft / Michael J. Oliver, Trade Unions and the Economy 1870-2000, Aldershot 2000.

[33] McIlroy / Campbell, High Tide.

[34] Andolfatto / Labbé, Histoire, p. 273. Mouriaux, Syndicalisme, p. 41, more cautiously speaks of an „offensive syndicale".

[35] In the FRG, Müller-Jentsch, Gewerkschaften, p. 119, suggests, the 1970s were „the decade of the unions", following on Bernd Faulenbach, Das sozialdemokratische Jahrzehnt. Von der Reformeuphorie zur neuen Unübersichtlichkeit. Die SPD 1969-1982, Bonn 2011.

[36] Cf. Chris Wrigley, Women in the Labor Market and the Unions, in: High Tide, pp. 43-69. At the end of the 20th century, Wrigley, Trade Unions, p. 31, concludes, „[t]he most likely person to be a trade unionist was a female black in paid employment." This is neatly illustrated by the cover photographs of the two volumes by Campbell et al.

of major industrial conflicts and portrayals of trade union leaders.

Yet these obvious similarities also serve as contrasting foil for significant differences. Thus Peter Dorey's research argues that the British trade unions' preference for a voluntarist organisation of industrial relations was amenable to a non-interventionist Tory government, offering sufficient common ground until the 1960s.[37] This UK compromise, however, differed from the consensus that is often said to have characterised the Fair Deal era in the US. Nelson Lichtenstein has cast serious doubts on this interpretation, arguing that the accord was „a product of defeat", notably the reversal of New Deal reforms in the Taft Hartley Act of 1947 – „a dictate imposed upon an all-too-reluctant labour movement in an era of its political retreat and internal division".[38] In this, the US situation to some extent resembled West Germany where trade unions had set out to rebuild not only state and society but also the economy along democratic terms by means of nationalisation and co-determination. But after the initial success of co-determination in heavy industry the FRG's umbrella organisation *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (DGB) found itself confronted by resurging business elites and the conservative, market-oriented Adenauer-Erhard governments and lost the momentum for economic democratisation. As a result, the 1963 Düsseldorf programme – the corollary of the SPD's Godesberg – prioritised terms and conditions of employment rather than fundamental reforms of capitalism, implying, according to Walter Müller-Jentsch, a „retreat to what was feasible".[39]

The post-war tome shows a meeting of middle-aged, white men in dark suits whereas the 70s volume depicts a mixed crowd at Grunwick with women and migrants centre stage. For an alternative to the „persistent gender- and colour-blind approach" of many trade union histories see Mary Davis, Comrade or Brother? A History of the British Labour Movement, London: 2nd edt. Pluto, 2009 (quote at p. 5).

[37] Peter Dorey, British Conservatism and Trade Unionism, 1945-1964, Farnham / Burlington: Ashgate 2009; cf. McIlroy / Campbell, Mapping Industrial Politics, in: Campbell / Fishman / McIlroy, Compromise, pp. 69-113, 76-80.

[38] Lichtenstein, State, pp. 98-140, at 99.

[39] Müller-Jentsch, Gewerkschaften, p. 74f. Karl Lauschke, Hans Böckler. Bd. 2: Gewerkschaftlicher Neubeginn 1945-1952, Essen 2005, pp. 77-92, 398; Schneider, Geschichte, pp. 314-327.

Other important national variations include the contested role incomes policies played in the British case (driven by recurrent waves of inflation and balance-of-payments crises)[40], the heavy infighting among the ideologically divided French unions which made all advances „fragile"[41], or the very different fates of communist trade unionism: out in the wilderness in the US, under pressure, but relevant at the shop floor level in Britain and West Germany, and a genuine force in the French arena.[42]

Inevitably, such synopses are limited in their ability to depict diversity inside and disunity among trade unions, not to speak of local and regional patterns. This pertains particularly to stories of great (or indeed not so great) men as in Robert Taylor's history of the TUC with its explicit focus on leaders and events rather than structures and processes. While this does not imply that nothing can be learned from Taylors's book – his characterisation of TUC officers from Walter Citrine to John Monks is colourful and lucid, offering insights such as Len Murray's confession how seriously the unions underestimated Margaret Thatcher („we completely misread history") – such an analysis goes only so far.[43] The focus on national federations tends to obscure the differing fates and interests of individual unions, e.g. with an eye to the inter-related processes of 'feminisation' and 'tertiarisation' which affected different industries and thus different trade unions in

[40] Aldcroft / Oliver, Trade Unions; Wrigley, Trade Unions; cf. Glen O'Hara, 'Planned Growth of Incomes' or 'Emergency Gimmick'? The Labour Party, the Social Partners and Incomes Policy, 1964-70, in: LHR 69 (2004), pp. 59-81.

[41] Andolfatto / Labbé, Histoire, pp. 314f.; cf. Mouriaux, Syndicalisme.

[42] John McIlroy, Notes on the Communist Party and Industrial Politics, in: Campbell / Fishman / McIlroy, High Tide, pp. 216-258; Richard Stevens, Cold War Politics: Communism and Anti-Communism, in the Trade Unions, in: Campbell / Fishman / McIlroy, Compromise, pp. 168-191. For communist shop-floor activism cf. the books by Karl Lauschke and Dietmar Süß below. Another notable difference is the role played by confessional unions which were insignificant in the States, the UK and – with the partial exception of Bavaria – West Germany but served as counterweight to communist trade unionism in France until its „déconfessionalisation" in 1964 (Moriaux, Syndicalisme, p. 45).

[43] Robert Taylor, The TUC. From the General Strike to New Unionism, Basingstoke 2000, at p. viii and p. 246.

different ways.[44]

An effort to overcome the constraints of the synopsis format and account for the diversity of the trade union movement is undertaken by Alastair Reid's concise volume. While conventional in its chronological narrative Reid's study is organised along his distinction between assembly, process, and general workers, respectively correlated with strictly voluntarist craft unions, 'seniority' unions which co-opt government intervention, and general unions largely dependent on support from government and/or other unions. Whether or not this systematisation is pertinent to analysing mid-twentieth century industrial relations, is up to debate, but the linkage of occupational characteristics with union structure and strategy leads the way for future research.[45]

One of the reasons for the general deficit in terms of differentiation is the massive lacuna of histories of individual trade unions, owing, it would seem, to the swings of academic fashion which have not favoured institutional history (although business history is vibrant). Even for large and influential trade unions – both in Britain and Germany[46] – comprehensive analyses for the post-1945 period are missing. Biographies of unionists might serve as substitutes to some extent – e.g. a biography of the DGB's Ludwig Rosenberg reveals his exasperating efforts to mediate between the constituent unions[47] –, yet, the lack of sources and hesitancy among the collectively-defined unions to advertise their leading men (rarely women[48]) are major obstacles. While there is no dearth of books on social democratic and Labour Party leaders and statesmen, biographies of trade union leaders are few and far between.[49] Despite the above-mentioned scepticism as to the propensity of great men's history to over-personalise, these deficits imply narrow limits to what trade union historiography can achieve: without a good idea of how unions were organised, by whom and how they were run, and which debates were held and when, it will be nearly impossible to reconstruct, analyse and explain their policies. Nor will it be easy to evaluate Alastair Reid's prognosis of an imminent trade union revival.[50] Hence, such studies would accomplish essential ground work – and they might even offer innovative ideas for a renewed organisation history.

[44] Some quantitative data is provided by Neil Millward / Alex Bryson / John Forth, All Change at Work? British Employment Relations 1980-1998, London 2000, however, little explanation is offered.

[45] Reid, United.

[46] Peculiar to Germany is the traditionally strict – though today largely obsolete – legal distinction between (blue collar) *Arbeiter* and (privately employed white collar) *Angestellte* which is further complicated by the additional category of Beamte (civil servants). *Angestelltengeschichte* is little integrated into labour history as illustrated by the two separate volumes in the standard *Enzyklopädie deutscher Geschichte* series: Gerhard Schildt, Die Arbeiterschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, München 1996, and Günther Schulz, Die Angestellten seit dem 19. Jahrhundert, München 2000. Apart from hagiographical studies few studies have researched white collar trade unionism. An insider perspective is offered in Hans-Peter Müller, Die Deutsche Angestellten-Gewerkschaft im Wettbewerb mit dem DGB. Geschichte der DAG 1947-2001, Baden-Baden 2011.

[47] Frank Ahland, Ludwig Rosenberg. Biographie eines Gewerkschaftsführers, Bochum 2002 pp. 412f.

[48] There is not a single biography of a female German trade unionist, mirroring the absence of women from the higher echelons of trade union bureaucracy, and only one British autobiography by former print union leader Brenda Dean, Hot Mettle. Sogat, Murdoch and Me, London 2007; cf. Schneider, Geschichte, p. 467.

[49] The biography of the first DGB president was published only in 2005: Ulrich Borsdorf / Karl Lauschke, Hans Böckler, 2 vols., Essen 2005. Despite the title, Ursula Bitzegeio, Über Partei- und Landesgrenzen hinaus: Hans Gottfurcht (1896-1982) und die gewerkschaftliche Organisation der Angestellten, Bonn 2009, fades out in 1949. A detailed biography of Hans Matthöfer sheds some light on the IG Metall's education policies, and internal disputes, Werner Abelshauser, Nach dem Wirtschaftswunder. Der Gewerkschafter, Politiker und Unternehmer Hans Matthöfer, Bonn 2009, pp. 103-201; cf. Jens Becker / Harald Jentsch, Otto Brenner. Eine Biographie, Göttingen 2007, and Klaus Kempter, Eugen Loderer und die IG Metall. Biografie eines Gewerkschafters, Filderstadt 2003. – In the UK, Jack Jones and Joe Gormley published autobiographical accounts.

[50] Reid, United, pp. 418-422; cf. Schneider, Geschichte, pp. 488-491.

Industrial Relations history

One of the early reactions to the impending decline of trade history in the 1980s was the call for a history of industrial relations as advocated by Jonathan Zeitlin and, a decade later, institutionalised in the

annual *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*. Zeitlin's criticism targeted conceptions of labour history which sweepingly identified trade unions politics with workers' aspirations and described these in terms of class. Rather than writing labour history as the social history of the working class, determined by economically defined, quasi-objective class interests, Zeitlin suggested investigating the institutions of the analytical compound 'labour', i.e. the changing, historically contingent interplay of working people, trade unions, employers, and the state.[51] Highly innovative in the wake of the then not yet hegemonic New Institutional Economics, Zeitlin's concept itself has come under criticism for being overly rigid and bound by its theoretical shackles over the past decades.[52]

That notwithstanding, the suggestion to reconsider labour history as the history of industrial relations has opened the way for studies which investigate power relations at the workplace and in the larger industrial arena as complex settings in which multiple protagonists with different and, significantly, changing rather than constant interests interact. Recurring subjects include collective bargaining procedures, state legislation, regulation and intervention, and the role of labour law. Methodologically, the workshop level is frequently prominent in such studies, though more with an eye to social relations at the workplace than to the actual work process. Several influential works on nineteenth and early twentieth century case studies have put key questions on the agenda from which contemporary labour history might take its cues.

A case in question is Willibald Steinmetz's ground-breaking study of labour law and the uses it was put to in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. With refreshing iconoclasm, Steinmetz debunks two dominant

[51] Jonathan Zeitlin, From Labour History to the History of Industrial Relations, in: Economic History Review (EHR) 40 (1987), pp. 159-184.

[52] John McIlroy / Alan Campbell, Still setting the pace? Labour history, industrial relations and the history of post-war trade unionism, in: LHR 64 (1999) pp. 179-198, 182, 196; McIlroy / Campbell / Fishman, Introduction: Approaching Post-War Trade Unionism, in: McIlroy / Campbell / Fishman, Compromise, pp. 1-19, 9.

narratives about voluntarist industrial relations in Britain: on the one hand, the widespread belief that workers and trade unionists in the Isles traditionally wanted the state to leave them alone, mistrusted the law and its practitioners, and thus gave the courts a wide berth, choosing collective bargaining as an alternative to class justice; on the other hand, the story of the rise and fall of contractual freedom, popular with British lawyers who regarded statutory labour law as an infringement of the freedom to barter and an undue limitation of judge-made common law. The inflexibility of British law rather than collective distrust of lawyers and the widespread enthusiasm for alternative, extra-legal institutions as proof of working-class autonomy among industrial relations scholars, Steinmetz argues, effectively preempted the establishment of a differentiated system of labour law until the 1960s.[53]

These conclusions find some backing in Chris Howell's lucid analysis of the transformation of British industrial relations in the twentieth century. Unlike Steinmetz, however, he does not discard voluntarism in its entirety but focuses on how this „particular understanding of the sources of labor power came to be internalized by the unions themselves".[54] Essentially, Howell argues, the British trade unions deluded themselves of their apparent autonomy and power, overlooking that the framework for 'free collective bargaining', namely the provision of legal immunities for industrial action rather than positive rights for trade unions, was defined and guaranteed by the state – and thus

[53] Willibald Steinmetz, Begegnungen vor Gericht. Eine Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte des englischen Arbeitsrechts (1850-1925), München 2002. – The study also contradicts Reid's assessment of the 'assembly workers' and their craft unions as the strongest proponents of voluntarism, e.g. with an eye to the printing and construction trades. – In contrast to German research, historians of French labour relations have shed more light on the legal governance structure; cf. Sabine Rudischhauser, Vertrag, Tarif, Gesetz. Der politische Liberalismus und die Anfänge des Arbeitsrechtes in Frankreich, 1890-1902, Berlin 1999; ibid., Neue Forschungen zur Geschichte des französischen Arbeitsrechts, in: AfS 47 (2007), pp. 553-568; Alain Chatriot (ed.), Les politiques du travail (1906-2006). Acteurs, institutions, réseaux, Rennes 2006.

[54] Chris Howell, Trade Unions and the State. The Construction of Industrial Relations Institutions in Britain, 1890-2000, Princeton 2005, p. 10.

revocable when the Thatcher government withdrew from „tripartite commitment to voluntarism“[55], to the unions' detriment. Only in the face of the „decollectivization or the individualisation of bargaining“ did the trade unions appreciate what was to be gained from statutory laws.[56] Now, however, they faced a hostile government and multinational corporations which were keen to exploit the favourable situation, enforcing single-union agreements and downsizing tri- to bipartisan relations as Henry Loewendahl's study of Nissan and Siemens illustrates.[57] Thus, in the 1990s, European legislation, standardisation and institution building offered new options for national unions which had previously been wary of such moves. But as Thomas Fetzer's pioneering study of General Motors and Ford subsidiaries in Britain and (West) Germany shows, 'Europe' was not a trump card nor did it halt the rise of concession bargaining. Rather, the European works councils „themselves became a kind of 'clearing house"' where the terms of concession bargaining were negotiated.[58]

With an eye to the legal framework of industrial relations the (West) German case is often referred to as the alternative to British voluntarism.[59] Evidence is not only found in constitutional guarantees of the freedom of association and direct action but in particular in the concept of codetermination and its long tradition reaching back to World War One. How misleading the notion of *the* labour movement can be has been argued by Werner Plumpe in his monograph on the works councils in the Weimar Republic. Revisiting an apparently familiar subject from an industrial-relations angle Plumpe found that the codification of *Betriebsräte* competences, although a „child of the revolution“ was by no means a triumph for the trade unions as these

[55] Campbell / Fishman / McIlroy, Compromise, p. 77.

[56] Howell, Trade Unions, p. 159.

[57] Henry Bernard Loewendahl, Bargaining with Multinationals. The Investment of Siemens and Nissan in North-East England, Basingstoke 2001.

[58] Thomas Fetzer, Paradoxes of internationalization. British and German trade unions at Ford and General Motors 1967-2000, Manchester 2012, p. 186.

[59] In France, the debate was about participation rather than codetermination; see Adam Steinhouse, Workers' participation in post-liberation France, Lanham 2001.

had little interest in competing institutions on the company level.[60] Moreover, the workers' representatives were obliged to act in the interest of their respective companies, not solely that of the workforce, which opened the way for cooperation with pragmatic managers and helped to master the crisis-ridden years of the early republic. However, Plumpe's company-level analysis also demonstrates how strongly employers' and employees' interests and policies varied, both between and within industries as well as over time. In effect, the *Betriebsräte* model was always contested and a particular failure in heavy industry where management inability to communicate translated into inertia and conflict.[61]

Works councils became a key component of the post-war reconstruction in West Germany. However, they were now accompanied by additional institutions: the codetermination act provided for the representation of workers' representatives on the supervisory board and the appointment of an *Arbeitsdirektor* on the executive board who was in charge of labour affairs. Yet the apparent triumph of German labour was qualified at best. Parity with capital was achieved only in heavy industry and on the supervisory board while the *Arbeitsdirektor* could not be appointed against the majority of employees' representatives – but not by them alone either. Successive reforms expanded codetermination to some extent but fell short of notions of industrial democracy. The practical effects of breaking up the bipolar configuration of employers and employees frequently proved a strain on the different incarnations of labour: trade unions, works councils and *Arbeitsdirektoren* all had a stake in representing workers' interests but differed strongly as to what extent and in what ways these interests were pursued. Karl Lauschke's and Dietmar Süß's thorough studies on heavy industry find that relations between the three institutions, the respective workforces, and management displayed highly idiosyncratic patterns, depending on the individuals involved

[60] Werner Plumpe, Betriebliche Mitbestimmung in der Weimarer Republik. Fallstudien zum Ruhrbergbau und zur Chemischen Industrie, München 1999, pp. 44f., 50f.

[61] Ibid., pp. 279f., 412f., 423.

as well as on the economic parameters of the respective companies.[62] Codetermination met its limitations in the crisis decades of the 1970s and 80s, and its proponents found themselves fighting a rear-guard battle against employer and government initiatives for a roll back while at the same time assuming co-management functions in the administration of closures, job cuts, and the flexibilisation of terms and conditions.[63]

Whether or not codetermination – besides other factors such as industrial unionism, sectoral bargaining, substantial strike benefits, the legality of lock-outs, etc. – accounts for the „low-strike profile" of the West German economy is in dispute. While Heiner Dribbusch detects a „certain pacifying effect"[64], he also points out that the unions' inclination to strike has been a much less significant factor in determining industrial conflict since the 1980s when employers gained the initiative. Meanwhile Peter Birke has supplemented the dominant focus on 'official', i.e. union-organised stoppages by investigating wildcat strikes and finding that well before the 1969 and 1973 waves, 'unauthorised' industrial unrest was widespread. These conflicts often arose from issues other than wages and working time or were initiated by marginalised sections of the workforce, notably women and migrants. Trade unions, Birke argues, were keen to fence these initiatives in.[65] Although set in another context, especially with an eye to the different legal parameters of German and British industrial action, the

[62] Karl Lauschke, Die halbe Macht. Mitbestimmung in der Eisen- und Stahlindustrie 1945-1989, Essen 2007; Dietmar Süß, Kumpel und Genossen. Arbeiterschaft, Betrieb und Sozialdemokratie in der bayerischen Montanindustrie 1945 bis 1976, München 2003. For the chemical industry cf. Klaus Tenfelde / Karl-Otto Czikowsky / Jürgen Mittag (eds.), Stimmt die Chemie? Mitbestimmung und Sozialpolitik in der Geschichte des Bayer-Konzerns, Essen 2007; however, several of the post-war chapters are reminiscences rather than historiographical work.

[63] Lauschke, Macht, pp. 222-228, 318-329.

[64] Heiner Dribbusch, Industrial action in a low-striker country. Strikes in Germany 1968-2005, in: Sjaak van der Velden et al. (eds.), Strikes around the world, 1968-225. Case-studies of 15 countries, Amsterdam 2007, pp. 267-297, at 277.

[65] Peter Birke, Wilde Streiks im Wirtschaftswunder. Arbeitskämpfe, Gewerkschaften und soziale Bewegungen in der Bundesrepublik und Dänemark, Frankfurt am Main 2007.

famous 1968 Dagenham dispute illustrates a similar point: initially a protest of female workers against injustice and exploitation, the male trade union leadership strove to control the strike by making it an equal-pay issue.[66]

The downward trajectory of strike activity found by Dribbusch for the FRG, holds also true for the US where Joseph McCartin sees industrial action „approaching extinction" and for the UK where David Lyddon has diagnosed a continuing „strike drought".[67] This implies a major reversal from the 1970s' notion of the UK as a particularly strike-prone country which was closely linked to the ever-present discourse of decline. Particular blame for industrial rest – and, accordingly, decreasing productivity although this correlation does not stand up to scrutiny[68] – is laid on the shop stewards. These epitomised the alleged British disease and were put centre stage by the Donovan Report in 1968. Yet, the radical shop steward was a rather recent invention, resulting from the employer-initiated transformation of the shop floor into a key bargaining arena in an effort to control production and increase output; the growing importance of the non-union foreman went hand in hand with the more assertive shop steward. Their numbers rose dramatically from 90,000 in the early 1960s to 300,000 in 1980, making them near-ubiquitous in private manufacturing and boosting their visibility.[69]

In contrast, Richard Hyman has argued that shop steward strength

[66] Sheila Cohen, Equal pay – or what? Economics, politics and the 1968 Ford sewing machinists' strike, in: Labor History 53 (2012), pp. 51-68.

[67] See the respective chapters in Velden, Strikes.

[68] Alan Booth / Joseph Melling, Workplace Cultures and Business Performance: British Labour Relations and Industrial Output in Comparative Perspective, in: Melling / Booth, Managing, pp. 1-25, at 3-9; Jim Tomlinson, The British 'Productivity Problem' in the 1960s, in: Past and Present 175 (2002), pp. 188-210, 208, concludes that „Much of the 1960s debate can be seen as just another version of the long-running saga of blaming the workers for Britain's economic weaknesses."

[69] Alec McKinlay / Joseph Melling, Shop Floor Politics, in: Post-war Compromise, pp. 222-241; McIlroy / Campbell, Mapping, in: Campbell / Fishman / McIlroy, High Tide, p. 100. For the key role of supervisory personnel see also Joseph Melling, Fordism and the Foreman, in: Melling / Booth, Managing, pp. 27-47.

was only possible because British managers had not been running the shop floor in the first place, creating a „vacuum“ which was filled by workers' representatives. When management tried to reassert its prerogative from the mid-1960s – „under strong government encouragement“ of which the Donovan Commission was a key part – conflict was imminent. Against this background, says Hyman, the differentiation between politics and industrial relations which characterised the Labour Party-trade union relationship, did not make „much sense in an era when government accepted a role as macroeconomic manager [...] and when the state was a major employer in its own right.“[70] In other words, industrial relations in an age of corporatist inclinations could not be voluntarist in any meaningful way.

Corporatism and welfare state histories

Corporatism and its different shades have been high on the agenda of labour historiography over the past two decades, furthered by related debates about 'Americanisation'[71] and the 'varieties of capitalism'.[72] The German and British cases feature prominently in this context with studies pondering whether or not there are indigenous types of capitalism, how these may be branded respectively, if, how and to what degree they were americanised, and what role industrial relations play.[73] Gary Herrigel and Jonathan Zeitlin have highlighted the limits of 'Americanisation', both as an analytical category and

[70] Richard Hyman, Afterword: What went wrong, pp. 353-364, at pp. 357, 362.

[71] Mary Nolan, The Transatlantic Century. Europe and America, 1890-2010, Cambridge 2012, and Volker Berghahn, Industriegesellschaft und Kulturtransfer. Die deutsch-amerikanischen Beziehungen im 20. Jahrhundert, Göttingen 2010.

[72] Peter A. Hall and David Soskice (eds.), Varieties of Capitalism. The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage, Reprint Oxford 2004; in particular Kathleen Thelen, Varieties of Labor Politics in the Developed Democracies, in: ibid., pp. 71-102.

[73] For the German case see Volker R. Berghahn / Sigurt Vitols (eds.), Gibt es einen deutschen Kapitalismus? Tradition und globale Perspektiven der sozialen Marktwirtschaft, Frankfurt am Main 2006, and Ralf Ahrens / Boris Gehlen / Alfred Reckendrees (eds.), Die „Deutschland AG“. Historische Annäherungen an den bundesdeutschen Kapitalismus, Essen 2013.

a „historical project“, in a volume edited back in 2000.[74] Zeitlin's own contribution to the collection illustrates how British trade unions actively promoted US-style productivity policies, training their staff in work-study techniques, etc. The transatlantic transfer did not take the form of wholesale adoption, though, but developed as a selective and hybrid adaption of US technologies, governance models, and the organisation of production. As a result, engineering workforces in British car manufacturing were required to develop high versatility and acquire a greater array of skills so as to „cope effectively with the variations [...] involved in turning out different products on the same lines.“[75]

Qualified Americanisation, under the guise of 'Westernisation' (signifying a shared European-American value system rather than a one-way transfer), is also the theme of Julia Angster's study of the post-war transformations of SPD and DGB. She unearths how the party and trade union wings of the (West) German labour movement not only embraced but co-created what Angster calls „consensus capitalism“. Her analysis skilfully links the US trade unions' internal debates, their accordance with economic liberalism and the „politics of productivity“ (Charles Maier) as a means of establishing „welfare capitalism“ with emigration and acculturation experiences of European social democrats and trade unionists who would play key roles in the reconstruction of their economies. The Marshall Plan, Angster contends, was crucial in diverting social democratic third-way inclinations of the early post-war years to liberal-corporatist conceptions which also informed the post-Gompers AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations), reconciling traditional

[74] Jonathan Zeitlin, Introduction: Americanization and its Limits. Reworking US Technology and Management in Post-War Europe and Japan, in: Jonathan Zeitlin / Garry Herrigel (eds.), Americanization and its Limits. Reworking US Technology and Management in Post-War Europe and Japan, Oxford 2000 (Repr. 2006), pp. 1-50, 18.

[75] Jonathan Zeitlin, Americanizing British Engineering? Strategic Debate, Selective Adaptation, and Hybrid Innovation in Post-War Reconstruction, 1945-1960, in: ibid, pp. 123-152, esp. 130f., 147-150, quote at 150.

voluntarism with a more active, planning state.[76]

Like Angster's, Andrea Rehling's study on German corporatism has its roots in the Westernisation paradigm but her terminology betrays significant differences when she speaks of „authoritarian" rather than „consensus liberalism" as the backbone of the FRG's political economy. Her dissertation covers the long period from Weimar to reunified Germany and the evolution of corporatist conceptions, „the neglected wee brother of parliamentarianism".[77] Her analysis delineates the development of corporatist institutions as means of tripartite, macroeconomic policy-making, first established in the *Zentralarbeitsgemeinschaft* accord of 1918 and restored in the aftermath of World War Two, which came under severe pressure when macroeconomic steering appeared to fail from the 1970s onwards. Scrupulously distinguishing between different, changing conceptions of corporatism among all three factions – trade unions, employers, and state agencies –, Rehling does not only explore the making of German *Sozialpartnerschaft* but opens the door for comparisons with other models such as the UK's Social Contract or Social Compact, especially with an eye to the absence of formal incomes policies in the deliberations of German corporatist institutions.[78] Research on the tripartite, advisory National Economic Development Council (NEDC) – which included wage issues – suggests that attempts to institutionalise corporatist coordination met with distrust of possible government dirigisme on both sides and particular resistance from British employers unwilling to let go of collective laissez-faire. This not only rendered the NEDC „a peripheral feature of the British political landscape"[79], misgivings about

[76] Julia Angster, Konsenskapitalismus und Sozialdemokratie. Die Westernisierung von SPD und DGB, München 2003, p. 109.

[77] Andrea Rehling, Konfliktstrategie und Konsenssuche in der Krise. Von der Zentralarbeitsgemeinschaft zur Konzertierten Aktion, Baden-Baden 2011, pp. 264, 41.

[78] Ibid., pp. 350f. Pattern bargaining, led by IG Metall, may however be seen as a functional equivalent of incomes policy; cf. Britta Rehder, Betriebliche Bündnisse für Arbeit in Deutschland. Mitbestimmung und Flächentarif im Wandel, Frankfurt am Main 2001, pp. 47f.

[79] Stewart Wood, Why 'Indicative Planning' Failed: British Industry and the Formation

corporatism and planning also seem to have made British business more susceptible to alternative, neo-liberal models.[80]

If incomes policies were too contentious to be systematically discussed in the tripartite arena, occupational safety and health was not. A traditional issue on trade-union agendas, the German unions increased their lobbying efforts from the late 1960s onwards for two reasons: first, major advances in terms of wages and working time over the past decades allowed to complement quantitative by qualitative demands; second, with the SPD in power and chancellor Brandt's call for a „humanisation of work" such demands promised to fall on sympathetic ears. As Stefan Remeke's research has shown, however, the expansion of workplace protection was no guaranteed success for various reasons: the SPD's need to compromise with their liberal coalition partner; disagreements within the DGB; and traditionalist positions as on gender-related issues where feminist approaches were hardly more than „background noise" to male-dominated decision-making. In effect, DGB schemes combined features of modern welfare state policies with highly conservative notions of work and workplace organisation.[81] Moreover, Remeke finds that the DGB often did not so much act as a pressure group lobbying for maximum demands but worked like a pseudo-parliamentarian player, aware of the need to

of the National Economic Development Council (1960-64), in: Twentieth Century British History (TCBH) 11 (2000), pp. 431-459, at 432; Astrid Ringe / Neil Rollings, Responding to Relative Decline: The Creation of the National Economic Development Council, in: EHR 53 (2000), pp. 331-353. Cf. the comparable failure of the Training and Enterprise Councils: Desmond King, Employers, Training Policy, and the Tenacity of Voluntarism in Britain, in: TCBH 8 (1997), pp. 383-411.

[80] This argument is advanced by Neil Rollings, Cracks in the Post-War Keynesian Settlement? The Role of Organised Business in Britain in the Rise of Neoliberalism Before Margaret Thatcher, in: TCBH 24 (2013). Joseph Melling / Adam Booth, Waiting for Thatcher, in: Melling / Booth, Managing, pp. 125-163, dispute that the unions on the other hand, sabotaged wage determination and industrial coordination purposefully and for selfish reasons.

[81] Stefan Remeke, Gewerkschaften und Sozialgesetzgebung. DGB und Arbeitnehmerschutz in der Reformphase der sozialliberalen Koalition, Essen 2005, pp. 370-77, 404-417, 458, at p. 259.

organise majorities and thus willing to make concessions.[82] Here, the US case makes for an interesting comparison. In her published dissertation, Tracy Roof argues that in its attempts to expand welfare state provisions, organised labour reacted to the institutional obstacles of Congress's legislative procedures not only by moderating its demands in order to make them palatable to Republicans but also campaigned for congressional reform itself – although with less success than Roof's somewhat teleological narrative pointing to 'Obamacare' suggests.[83] Meanwhile in Britain, in another tripartite organisation, the National Coal Board, the National Union of Mine Workers (NUM) put increasing pressure on the employers to tackle various diseases covered by the colloquial term 'miner's lung'. A study by Arthur McIvor and Ronald Johnston shows that while the Board's „most significant contribution to protecting miners from respiratory disease may have been its closure programme", the NUM – despite its adherence to the politics of productivity – was a „substantial counterweight to intransigent medical and political opinion regarding the non-classification of an industrial disease."[84]

Works such as these indicate how tightly studies of labour's role in corporatist arrangements are entangled with the history of the welfare state. This has been a major focus of recent European historiography. Several large volumes tell the story of how the welfare state expanded, helped to stabilise democracy in the latter half of the twentieth century, turning, however, from a problem-solving to a problem-generating institution due to demographic change, the end of the economic boom, and intensified, global competition.[85] These grand narratives offer

[82] Ibid., pp. 183f.

[83] Roof, American Labor.

[84] Arthur McIvor / Ronald Johnston, Miners' Lung. A History of Dust Disease in British Coal Mining, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, quotes at pp. 176 and 218.

[85] Hartmut Kaelble, Sozialgeschichte Europas. 1945 bis zur Gegenwart, München 2007; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte 5. Bundesrepublik und DDR 1949-1990, München 2008; Hans Günter Hockerts, Der deutsche Sozialstaat. Entfaltung und Gefährdung seit 1945, Göttingen 2011.

healthy amounts of data, frequently comparative in scope[86], which delineate the increasing affluence and – with an eye to education expansion – social upward mobility of (male[87]) 'workers' in the post-war decades. Accordingly, data on working people's living standards and social security provisions these days can also be gleaned from middle-class histories. Thus, Dagmar Hilpert's concept of the (German) middle class explicitly includes sections of what used to be the working-class milieu, arguing that it was precisely the „committed, male, full-time employee" who served as a backbone of the FRG's welfare state policies.[88] Welfare policies which had been devised to support working-class families were expanded to cover middle-class households, with the side-effect that these very policies became an instrument of blurring the boundaries between working and middle class strata – an effect that across the Channel was exploited by Thatcherist ideas of „Middle Britain" as the Conservatives' „imagined constituency" and which deliberately abandoned the language of class.[89] The *embourgeoisement* thesis[90] recalls earlier, if less elaborate reflections by Arnold Gehlen or John K. Galbraith, but builds in particular on Josef Mooser's influential work on the „end of proletarity" during the 1960s. Mooser's diagnosis that social, cultural, and political working-class patterns were replaced by diverse, individualistic, and increasingly bourgeois ethics and living standards of an allegedly post-material generation have informed three decades of social history

[86] In particular Kaelble, Sozialgeschichte; Göran Therborn, European Modernity and Beyond. The Trajectory of European Societies, 1945-2000, London 1995.

[87] See the sobering conclusion by Pat Ayers, Work, Culture, and Gender. The Making of Masculinities in Post-war Liverpool, in: LHR 69 (2004), pp. 153-167, at 164, that „economic restructuring did nothing to challenge the status, privileges, rights and priorities of men relative to women in either the workplace or the home."

[88] Dagmar Hilpert, Wohlfahrtsstaat der Mittelschichten? Sozialpolitik und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (1949-1975), Göttingen 2012, p. 173.

[89] Jon Lawrence / Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, Margaret Thatcher and the decline of class politics, in: Ben Jackson / Robert Saunders (eds.), Making Thatcher's Britain, Cambridge 2012, pp. 132-147, at 135, 140f.

[90] Hilpert, Wohlfahrtsstaat, p. 343, for the UK cf. Lawrence / Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, Thatcher, p. 137.

in Germany.[91]

Mooser's stress on the open-ended character of this process and the thirty years which have passed since the first publication of his book, however, suggest the need for an update.[92] This is particularly true in the light of permanent unemployment as a characteristic of many developed economies and a key problem of the welfare state. Despite classical studies by Beveridge and the Marienthal research group[93], both trade unions and labour history have long marginalised the out-of-work. In contrast to many unions, often chided for the „scant sympathy" they muster(ed) for the unemployed[94], labour history lately has made significant progress with Richard Croucher going so far as to claim that research on unemployment is „testament to the continued vitality, integrity and autonomy of labour history".[95] If this is somewhat optimistic, historical inquiries not only into unemployment statistics but the actual unemployed surely have become more numerous. While much research is focused on nineteenth century and Great Depression unemployment[96], a few recent publications and on-going projects promise to shift attention to the experiences of the past five decades. Questions for future research might be if the sense of „normalisation" of unemployment is pervasive (and where), if there are nonetheless tipping points in terms of sheer numbers, and how societies change when they grow used to unemployment as a mass

[91] Josef Mooser, Arbeiterleben in Deutschland 1900-1970. Klassenlagen, Kultur und Politik, Frankfurt am Main 1984.

[92] This might be modelled upon Mike Savage, Identities and Social Change in Britain Since 1940. The Politics of Method, Oxford 2010 (with ch. 9 on issues of class identity).

[93] Cf. Alois Wacker, Arbeitslosigkeit als Thema der Sozialwissenschaften. Geschichte, Fragestellungen und Aspekte der Arbeitslosenforschung, in: Thomas Raithel / Thomas Schemmer, Die Rückkehr der Arbeitslosigkeit. Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland im europäischen Kontext 1973 bis 1989, München 2009, pp. 121-135.

[94] Tony Judt, Post-war. A History of Europe Since 1945, London 2005, p. 459.

[95] Richard Croucher, The History of Unemployed Movements, in: LHR 73 (2008), pp. 1-17, 2.

[96] See e.g. the contributions to Matthew Perry / Matthias Reiss (eds.), Unemployment and Protest. New Perspectives on Two Centuries of Contention, Oxford 2011.

phenomenon.[97]

Scientisation of labour and industrial relations

Welfare-state histories overlap with another recent trend which comes under the rubric of „scientisation of the social" (Lutz Raphael). One of the analytical hinges between the two is planning which has attracted much historiographical attention in the 2000s. What Glen O'Hara has called the „planning fervour" with its promise to promote development and growth, expand societal wealth and welfare, and overcome class conflict by means of controlled, coordinated policy-making seems to have been *the* consensus across differences of ideology, culture, etc. in the post-war era. Expert advice with its allegedly non-partisan rationality was believed to be a key ingredient of this politico-scientific recipe for stability through progress.[98]

The relevance of scientisation understood not only as the intense cooperation of academics and practitioners, especially politicians, but also as the reciprocal adaption to each other's logic, is obvious in the sphere of occupational health and hygiene. While the humanisation-of-work movement in 1970s' FRG was a paradigmatic case of the political arena opening itself to academic advice[99], the medicinal classification of dust disease as occupational was the precondition for British politics improving on health precautions and compensation payments. McIvor and Johnston relate this process to the expansion of social medicine and epidemiology in the 1940s and 1950s, stressing that progress was not straightforward but happened through „conflict and consensus between employers, workers and their trade union, clinicians and

[97] See Thomas Raithel, Jugendarbeitslosigkeit in der Bundesrepublik. Entwicklung und Auseinandersetzung während der 1970er und 1980er Jahre, München 2012, at p. 129, and Raithel / Schemmer, Rückkehr. Wiebke Wiede (Trier) is currently undertaking research on „Das arbeitslose Subjekt. Gouvernementalitäten von Arbeitslosigkeit in Großbritannien und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1964 bis 1990".

[98] Glen O'Hara, From Dreams to Disillusionment. Economic and Social Planning in 1960s Britain, Basingstoke 2006, p. 35.

[99] Anne Seibring, Die Humanisierung des Arbeitslebens in den 1970er-Jahren: Forschungsstand und Forschungsperspektiven, pp. 107-126.

the state".[100] The authors do not ignore miners' agency: frequently these ignored safety and health provisions for various reasons which included insufficient information, the prioritisation of pay over physical integrity, or notions of masculinity, in short, a „trade-off between higher earnings and the body." This added to the incremental and intermittent character of improvements in the pits, a result backed by other research which brings together science and body history.[101]

Such approaches – boosted by Jakob Tanner's ground-breaking research on factory meals[102] – are currently quite popular. Drawing heavily on Foucault's concept of *gouvernementalité*, they argue that body politics in the workplace need to be understood as „techniques of power". Several chapters in a volume edited by Lars Bluma and Karsten Uhl contend that the configuration of workers (and their bodies) in the workplace should be read as visible patterns of power relations (defined along the lines of class, gender, ethnicity, skills, etc.) and the site where discourse translates into practice. The factory is understood as „a complex ensemble of bodies, machines, and working processes which in turn produces new formations of bodies, space and knowledge", and the office as a „dispositif of discipline".[103] In a book-length study, Timo Luks thus reads the shop floor and the way work is organised as distinct expressions of modernity: the structure of production is portrayed as social engineering in action, a holistic and practical vision which unlike narrower rationalisation concepts did not stop at cutting costs and boosting efficiency but aimed at integrating man and machine just as much as worker, workplace and

[100] McIvor / Johnston, Miners' Lung, pp. 91-121, 141.

[101] Ibid., p. 255; cf. Lars Bluma, Der Körper des Bergmanns in der Industrialisierung. Biopolitik im Ruhrkohlenbergbau 1890-1980, in: Lars Bluma / Karsten Uhl (eds.), Kontrollierte Arbeit – disziplinierte Körper? Zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte der Industriearbeit im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, Bielefeld 2012, pp. 35-72.

[102] Jakob Tanner, Fabrikmahlzeit. Ernährungswissenschaft, Industriearbeit und Volksernährung in der Schweiz 1890-1950, Zürich 1999.

[103] Karsten Uhl / Lars Bluma, Arbeit – Körper – Rationalisierung. Neue Perspektiven auf den historischen Wandel industrieller Arbeitsplätze, in: Bluma / Uhl, Kontrollierte Arbeit, pp. 9-31, 18; Christine Schnaithmann, Das Schreibtischproblem. Amerikanische Büroorganisation um 1920, in: ibid., pp. 323-357, 348.

(urban) environment. Yet the emphasis on 'flow' as a key notion of social engineering reinforces the similarities with the rationalisation paradigm and the politics of productivity, as does Luks' suggestion that the advent of Post-Fordist production heralded the end of social engineering whose toolkit was incompletely equipped for lean, flexible, and just-in-time production. While these conclusions depend on whether or not (Post")""Fordism is a valid theoretical rendition of actual production regimes, they vindicate the findings of rationalisation research rather than supplementing them.[104]

Luks's study points to the rise of ergonomics as a scientific discipline in its own right, similar to Ruth Rosenberger's work on Human Resource Management (HRM) in German corporations. Starting from Bourdieu rather than Foucault, Rosenberger shows how HRM developed as a distinct field in the Federal Republic and finds that it assumed a markedly German outlook. Traditional leadership concepts persisted side by side with more modern brands of industrial psychology which were divided into old-school rationalisation ideas and a newer, modernising strand set which had developed in a process of democratisation but neither of Americanisation nor of consensus-oriented Westernisation and remained imbued with notions of community well into the 1970s.[105]

[104] Timo Luks, Der Betrieb als Ort der Moderne. Zur Geschichte von Industriearbeit, Ordnungsdenken und Social Engineering im 20. Jahrhundert, Bielefeld 2010. Cf. Rüdiger Hachtmann, Gewerkschaften und Rationalisierung: Die 1970er-Jahre – ein Wendepunkt, pp. 181-209, 183-197, argues for a long trajectory of the 1920s' rationalisation discourse. Rationalisation has been a major object of research for some time, in particular with an eye to continuties from the interwar years through the Third Reich to the FRG; see the references in Bluma / Uhl, Kontrollierte Arbeit, and Rüdiger Hachtmann's work.

[105] Ruth Rosenberger, Experten für Humankapital. Die Entdeckung des Personalmanagements in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, München 2008. For authoritarian continuities see Adelheid von Saldern, Das „Harzburger Modell". Ein Ordnungssystem für bundesrepublikanische Unternehmen 1960-1975, in: Thomas Etzemüller (ed.), Die Ordnung der Moderne. Social Engineering im 20. Jahrhundert, Bielefeld 2009, pp. 303-329. For a (US-centred) overview see Bruce Kaufman, The Development of the Human Resource Management Field in Historical and International Perspective, in: Peter Boxall / John Purcell / Patrick Wright (eds.), International Handbook of Human Resource Management, Oxford 2007, pp. 19-47.

Scientisation approaches usually cross the familiar caesurae of contemporary history. Most authors in the field work with a periodization that stretches roughly from the 1900s to the late 1960s although it is not always plain to see whether this is for pragmatic reasons of research design or if it implicates a unified historical period (which would look a lot like 'high modernity'). And is social engineering, after all, a contemporary mode of comprehending and arranging the material world, or is it an analytical construct of today's historians trying to make sense of what they find in their sources? These issues are further complicated if the social scientists who are involved in shaping the worlds of labour are the very same who help explain them to academic audiences. That the Oxford School of Industrial Relations experts Allan Flanders and Otto Kahn-Freud played key roles in both arenas, visibly so in the Donovan Commission, and thus contributed to the voluntarist paradigm they were formulating, is well-known.[106] Steinmetz's research broadens this perspective with an eye to nineteenth-century jurisprudence in Britain, and Lauschke has highlighted the influence of social scientists in elaborating co-determination procedures in West Germany.[107] The limits of scientisation are pointed out in Georg Altmann's concise history of active labour market policies in the FRG, showing how their outlook and legitimacy depended on academic guidance. But when the room for manoeuvre contracted in the 1970s, the hopes placed in state direction were thoroughly sobered. The 1980s' labour market policies did not so much express conceptual prerogatives as they were „dictated by the cash position".[108]

In directing the attention to experts and expertise, much scientisation research sees academics and their audience talking about rather

[106] Howell, Trade Unions, pp. 8-10, 40f., 101-106; John Kelly, Social Democracy and Anti-Communism: Allan Flanders and British Industrial Relations in the Early Post-war Period, in: Cambell / Fishman / McIlroy, Compromise, pp. 192-221.

[107] Steinmetz, Begegnungen; Lauschke, Macht.

[108] Georg Altmann, Aktive Arbeitsmarktpolitik. Entstehung und Wirkung eines Reformkonzepts in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Stuttgart 2004, pp. 252f. See also Tim Schanetzky. Die große Ernüchterung. Wirtschaftspolitik, Expertise und Gesellschaft in der Bundesrepublik 1966 bis 1982, Berlin 2007.

than with working people. Again, the marvellous project by McIvor and Johnston leads the way: large parts of their research are oral-history based and combine an outside, frequently bird's-eye perspective with the experiences of those concerned. We are reminded that work processes and health hazards are neither abstract nor separated from issues of justice and equity: people suffer and people die at work.

Industry and business histories

It is hardly coincidental that mines and miners figure prominently among research on working conditions, occupational hazards, etc. Coal mining, along with iron and steel production, may well be the best-researched industry in social and economic history, due to its pivotal role in the industrialisation process, the sheer numbers of employed people, its significance in the political struggles of organised labour, the high economic and political costs of deindustrialisation, and, not least of all, because of an abundance of sources. Still, there are several other well-researched industries, most of them also 'classical' trades such as textiles, shipbuilding, and, a more recent addition, car manufacturing. In comparison, many other industries – clerical and craft, agricultural and public services – have received only sparse attention if they have not been eclipsed entirely. In effect, labour-related information from industry-level and business history is highly selective and far from conveying a representative impression of work, working people, or industrial relations in the twentieth century. Yet, several newer studies manage to combine the macroeconomic framework and the respective industrial developments, the company and the shop-floor level.

This is particularly true for coal mining and the iron and steel industry with their frequent development of industrial clusters, archetypically represented by the Ruhr conurbation. For much of the twentieth century the Ruhr district was perceived not only as the economic mainstay of German power but also as the key to political stabilisation both in the domestic and in the international arena. While European integra-

tion was supposed to secure the latter by placing German resources in a supranational framework, the former assumption was a cross-party consensus: disorder at the Ruhr threatened democracy. The decline of European coal mining from the late 1950s onwards therefore implied a major challenge to the FRG. In order to prevent unrest, successive governments agreed to a continuous policy of subsidisation which would last well into the 1990s. This was fostered by both employers and trade unions at the Ruhr for whom the designation „social partners" was well warranted. As Christoph Nonn has shown, both sides realised the blackmailing potential of the spectre of mass unemployment and social turmoil, restaging the old antagonisms of class in mock conflicts in order to further their common cause. In fact, Nonn concludes, the real fights were no longer between labour and management but between mining and other industries trying to get access to public funding.[109]

While the management of the mining crisis – slowing down the transformation and facilitating the establishment of other industries – has often been lauded as proof of the potential of planning and a peculiar regional propensity for tripartite solutions[110], it set a precedent in the context of West Germany's federal structure. Other regions affected by the decline of heavy industry could and did lay claim to government support which led to a policy of giving everyone a slice of the budget[111]; affordable in times of prosperity, this became a liability in the post-boom years. When the steel industry followed the path laid out by coal in the 1970s, resources were much more limited, and complex redundancy payments schemes became a major feature

[109]Christopher Nonn, Die Ruhrbergbaukrise. Entindustrialisierung und Politik 1958-1969, Göttingen 2001, pp. 87f.

[110]For such an interpretation see Stefan Goch, Eine Region im Kampf mit dem Strukturwandel. Bewältigung von Strukturwandel und Strukturpolitik im Ruhrgebiet, Essen 2002, pp. 471-478, 497, for Opel's decision to choose Bochum as a production site: ibid., pp. 332f. However, scrupulous research by Nonn, Ruhrbergbaukrise, pp. 210-258, shows how CDU politicians obstructed reindustrialisation projects if these did not fit into their concepts of urban deconcentration.

[111]However, where bituminous coal was insignificant as in Bavaria, governments could afford not to intervene, cf. Stefan Grüner, Geplantes „Wirtschaftswunder"? Industrie- und Strukturpolitik in Bayern 1945 bis 1973, München 2009, pp. 391-395.

of crisis policies. Robust co-determination in heavy industry paid off for the workforces to some extent but also dragged employees' representatives into co-managing closures and lay-offs.[112]

How narrowly the limits of co-determination were drawn in times of crisis is also illustrated by Dietmar Süß's study of two lignite and steel producing companies in the Bavarian Palatinate. Located in an overwhelmingly agricultural, conservative region, these plants stood out in terms of unionisation and integration into social democratic networks, and the lignite case study even depicts an „almost corporatist amalgamation of capital and labour". Still, workers' and unions' influence on company affairs remained restricted when it came to cuts and closures. Although codetermination was unable to prevent deindustrialisation, Süß convincingly argues that factory-level institutions in particular played a significant role in feeding employees' interests into the companies' decision-making processes, disciplined the respective workforces, and helped assessing crisis measures in terms of their social acceptability (*Sozialverträglichkeit*).[113]

If Nonn's and Süß's conclusions cast doubt on the widespread notion of mine workers as the labour movement's shock troops, a comparative volume on coalfield societies thoroughly demystifies „the radical miner". Several contributions show how mining communities defined themselves in terms of occupation and location rather than class. Nor were they (inter)nationally uniform. Instead, constructions of miners' solidarity and community differed strongly from one coalfield to another.[114] Similar arguments have lately been put forward by David Howell and Jim Phillips in their analyses of the Miners' Strike of 1984-5. Howell stresses internal disunity due to different interests and heterogeneous traditions of unionism, notably in the case of the

[112]Goch, Region, pp. 184-187, 215-220.

[113]Süß, Kumpel, p. 208.

[114]Dick Geary, The Myth of the Radical Miner, in: Stefan Berger / Andy Croll / Norman LaPorte (eds.), Towards a Comparative History of Coalfield Societies, Aldershot 2005, pp. 43-64, p. 59; Leighton James, Trade Union Development in the Ruhr and South Wales, 1890-1914, in: Berger / Croll / LaPorte, Comparative History, pp. 253-266.

NUM's Nottinghamshire branch, as a major reason for the disastrous defeat suffered at the hand of the government. Phillips points out that Scottish mine workers had walked out well before the national strike, in response to the confrontational politics of pit management and in defiance of the diminution of their communities, resulting in „disproportionately punitive victimisation of union activists and officials" in Scotland.[115] Both suggest interpretations other than the familiar, personalising narratives of Scargill-vs.-Thatcher, and highlight how badly we need an archive-based, comprehensive and nuanced history of the Miners' Strike.

Categories such as „coalfield societies" and „occupational communities" articulate that industrial and business history is strongly interwoven with regional and urban history. In particular in monoindustrially structured regions, plants and towns are indivisible. In his study of the Swabian harmonica-producer Hohner, Hartmut Berghoff has tackled these issues under the label of „business history as social history", illustrating how Hohner's paternalist labour relations were in sync with the configuration of authority in the company's locality.[116] Marcus Raasch's voluminous study of Dormagen and its main employer, the chemical works of Bayer, goes even further. The title („We are Bayer") cites the emphatic claim of identity between plant, workforce, and municipality, and argues that notions of 'family' dominated well into the 1980s before they were recast along the lines of 'neighbourhood', indicating that the company's commitment to the site was no longer unreserved. While benefiting from its recourse to the history of mentalities, Raasch's study suffers from collaging the narratives and self-descriptions of various actors somewhat indiscriminately, making it hard for the reader to appreciate the interpretative

[115] David Howell, Defiant dominoes: working miners and the 1984-5 strike, in: Jackson / Saunders, Making, pp. 148-164; Jim Phillips, Collieries, communities and the miners' strike in Scotland, 1984-85, Manchester 2012, p. 175.

[116] Hartmut Berghoff, Zwischen Kleinstadt und Weltmarkt. Hohner und die Harmonika 1857-1961. Unternehmensgeschichte als Gesellschaftsgeschichte, Paderborn 1997.

range and the inter-relatedness of the sources.[117]

Corporate culture is also at the heart of Andrew Perchard's *Aluminiumville*, a near-total history of British Aluminium from its founding days to the millennium. Perchard highlights the central place which patriotic notions of 'service' occupied among managers and workforce and the peculiar micro-societies formed in the corporate villages. „Like coal-mining communities, the nature of the work undertaken in the Highlands aluminium settlements sharply defined the identities (particularly male) of those who lived in them, and the social and cultural patterns of life." The observed „extension of the hierarchy of the factory into the 'squirearchy' of the villages"[118] seems comparable to Berghoff's findings. Georg Goes's research on glass-production sites also focuses on places of selective industrialisation and bears some resemblance to Süß's volume. Goes finds his sample to have been characterised by a persistence of social and technological parameters and an „autocephaly of the productive milieu". Yet traditional notions of craft also provided fertile soil for trade unionism and social democracy, making the glass villages „red islands" in their respective regions.[119] If Goes cannot keep all promises suggested by the use of the milieu concept, his analysis is far superior to Bruno Kammann's chronicle of glass production in Gerresheim which is essentially business history without labour. Employees hardly figure and when they do they appear as objects of entrepreneurial direction.[120]

If most business histories suffer from a strong management bias, some industry-level histories display similar tendencies to privilege

[117] Markus Raasch, „Wir sind Bayer". Eine Mentalitätsgeschichte der deutschen Industriegesellschaft am Beispiel des rheinischen Dormagen (1917-1997), Essen 2007.

[118] Andrew Perchard, Aluminiumville. Government, Global Business and the Scottish Highlands, Lancaster 2012, at pp. 244, 305.

[119] Georg Goes, Arbeitermilieus in der Provinz. Geschichte der Glas- und Porzellanarbeiter im 20. Jahrhundert, Essen 2001, pp. 79, 247-249.

[120] Bruno Kammann, Gerresheimer Glas. Geschichte einer Weltfirma (1864-2000). Ein Beitrag zur Wirtschafts" , Sozial- und Stadtgeschichte Düsseldorfs, Essen 2007. The same is true for the present author's own Flick. Eine Konzerngeschichte vom Kaiserreich bis zur Bundesrepublik, Göttingen 2007.

upper-echelon decisions and market analyses over workers' issues.[121] Such deficits do not inevitably arise from constraints of place as Roy Church's short history of the UK's motor industry shows. On barely 150 pages Church manages to tell how British car manufacturing became the second largest in the world after 1945, only to be in deep trouble by the 1960s, partly nationalised a decade later, and more or less extinct by the 1990s. In this narrative, industrial relations figure prominently. While the enormous sway of shop stewards, as epitomised in the job-control agreement at Standard Motors, is characterised as a „most extreme form of managerial abdication" in the post-war era, Church challenges simplistic correlations of trade union power and 'declinism': „the direct effect of working days lost due to labour disputes was marginal", and comparative European turnover and absenteeism statistics come out in favour of British workers. Rather, the „levels of uncertainty" in industrial relations, combined with major managerial miscalculations and increasing international competition, explain the demise of British car manufacturing.[122]

Two case studies of Coventry and Luton – both prominent examples first of the 'new affluent worker', then of declinism-in-action – confirm Church's conclusions, e.g. the shop stewards' exceptional role. However they also underline how strongly individual developments differed not only between different firms but also within the same company: agreements that worked for British Leyland plants in Oxford and Birmingham caused major unrest in Coventry. And while Chrysler's attempts to americanise industrial relations at Coventry failed miserably, General Motor's Vauxhall affiliate at Luton managed to retain largely amicable labour relations even during the contested 1970s. Only in the 1980s, faced with Japanese competition, the multinational concern changed course and opted for „a rather mistaken

[121] A case in question is Josef Reindl, Wachstum und Wettbewerb in den Wirtschaftswunderjahren. Die elektrotechnische Industrie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in Großbritannien 1945-1967, Paderborn 2001.

[122] Roy Church, The rise and decline of the British motor industry, Cambridge 2004, pp. 67, 71, 121.

policy of automation" (which turned out more labour-intensive than foreseen). Trade union cooperation with management, though, continued in order to keep Luton's car industry alive.[123] The persistence of „country- and firm-specific trajectories" in the practices of trade union interest representation is also highlighted by Thomas Fetzer's comparative study.[124]

Fetzer's book pioneers research on industrial relations in the German car manufacturing which has long stood in the shadow of economic-miracle stories of the fabulous rise of Volkswagen, Daimler-Benz, or BMW. While two recently completed projects are bound to change this perspective[125], Thomas Schlemmer approaches the subject from another angle. His study of the Ingolstadt region 1945-75 devotes large sections to the Audi automotive works which were instrumental in transforming the military base into a „hot spot of structural change in Bavaria". Placed in a rural setting but not mono-industrially organised, Ingolstadt's labour market showed distinct characteristics. As female labour was employed by the local electronics manufacturer and comparably lower wages hampered recruitment elsewhere, rural commuters from the surrounding villages became a major part of Audi's workforce, though without abandoning their farms. As a result, Audi employees were far from uniformly 'proletarian' with city dwellers, former agricultural workers, and farmers working side by side. In the countryside, the lure of factory wages helped restructuring many farms into mid-sized, highly mechanised establishments.[126]

As a late industrialiser, Bavaria stood less to lose during the sober-

[123] David Thomas / Tom Donelly, The Coventry Motor Industry. Birth to Renaissance, Aldershot 2000; Len Holden, Vauxhall Motors and the Luton Economy, 1900-2002, Woodbridge 2003, p. 213.

[124] Fetzer, Paradoxes, p. 191.

[125] Ute Engelen, Demokratisierung der betrieblichen Sozialpolitik? Das Volkswagenwerk in Wolfsburg und Automobiles Peugeot in Sochaux 1944-1980, Baden-Baden 2013; Rüdiger Gerlach, Betriebliche Sozialpolitik im historischen Systemvergleich. Die Volkswagen AG und das IFA Kombinat PKW von den 1950er bis in die 1980er Jahre, PhD thesis Potsdam 2013.

[126] Thomas Schlemmer, Industriemoderne in der Provinz. Die Region Ingolstadt zwischen Neubeginn, Boom und Krise 1945 bis 1975, München 2009, at p. 5

ing post-boom period than most West German *Länder*. Neither was it held back by the crisis of coal nor did the southern state suffer from the demise of industries such as shipbuilding or textiles. The latter's decline was never high on the West German agenda precisely because of the absence of regional clusters. Stephan Lindner's study argues that this fact accounts for Bonn's unwillingness to subsidise textile manufacturing or, unlike France, lend a protectionist hand. Moreover, both political and industrial protagonists realised that only technological modernisation, rationalisation, and concentration would keep German textiles competitive in a cutthroat global market. Industrial peace was greatly helped by the boom which simplified the search for alternative employment, often at higher wages. When the tide turned in the 1970s and jobs were shed in large numbers, these merciful conditions were no longer available. Unsurprisingly, women and migrants were usually the first to go.[127] Lindner's results for Germany and France are largely corroborated by Alan Fowler's analysis of British textiles manufacturing which, after 1945, „went into terminal decline." As with German coal, employers and unions jointly lobbied for government support, earning the trade a „reputation for industrial harmony". Yet this did neither stop the industry's decline nor that of the „once mighty cotton unions" which joined the general unions.[128]

Fowler's article is part of the *Ashgate Companion to the History of Textile Workers* which spans the globe and a staggering 350 years. Twenty chapters cover different national case studies, and another ten draw on this data in thematic comparisons of migration patterns, ethnicity, industrial relations, working conditions, etc. The volume is a formidable achievement and brings out the complexity of global markets, thereby avoiding simplistic conclusions. Tirthankar Roy's chapter

[127] Stephan Lindner, Den Faden verloren. Die westdeutsche und die französische Textilindustrie auf dem Rückzug (1930/45-1990), München 2001, pp. 137-147, 251.

[128] Alan Fowler, Great Britain: textile workers in the Lancashire cotton and Yorkshire wool industries, in: Lex Heerma van Voss / Els Hiemstra-Kuperus / Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk (eds.), The Ashgate Companion to the History of Textile Workers, 1650-2000, Aldershot 2010, pp. 231-252, at pp. 250f.

on India, for instance, shows that one nation's loss was not necessarily another's gain. After a spell of autarky in the post-colonial period, the Indian economy re-integrated into globalised textiles markets at the end of the century, drawing its workforce from impoverished rural regions and employing men and women under conditions which were insecure in every respect. Globalization was correlated with decelerating earnings: in the artisan sector and the mills „real wages have not increased significantly in the last 150 years".[129] The winners of industrial migration to the East were businessmen, investors and (Western) consumers, not local workers and communities.

The *Companion* is modelled upon a previous Ashgate publication, the equally excellent *Dock Workers* whose two volumes combine country and city studies with broad, comparative sketches.[130] Despite minor quibbles – the covered periods vary widely, and some articles provide redundant information – the overall result is most impressive. All chapters offer dense descriptions of work in the docks, dockers' organisation in trade unions and political parties, their work culture(s) and community contexts. Many similarities come out clearly: dock work was hard, gruelling labour which, despite some mechanisation, remained essentially manual until the 1960s; accident rates were appalling; the working-culture was male, physical, and often hard-drinking. Casual labour was ubiquitous in ports from London, Le Havre and Bremen to New Orleans, Mombasa and Bombay – due to a volatile trade which depended on seasons, weather, and economic moods – until corporatist state policies pushed for regularisation and social and economic stabilisation on the waterfront.[131]

But the volume also demarcates the manifold differences between

[129] Tirthankar Roy, The long globalization and textile producers in India, in: Voss et al., Companion, pp. 253-274, at p. 274. Robert Cliver, China, in: ibid., pp. 103-139, arrives at similar conclusions.

[130] Sam Davies / Colin J. Davis / David de Vries, et al. (eds.), Dock Workers. International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790-1970, 2 vols., Aldershot 2000.

[131] Klaus Weinhauer, Power and control at the waterfront: casual labour and decasualisation, in: ibid., pp. 580-603.

different ports: there were „close-knit communities“ of dock workers in Liverpool and Glasgow[132] but not in San Francisco where much greater ethnic and cultural diversity defined patterns of identification; in New York, the port was divided in „a series of ethnic fiefdoms“.[133] The gang as the basic unit of labour organisation was prevalent in most ports, yet the division into various trades differed strongly. Hull's lightermen were quasi-artisanal but the lumpers working alongside were among the most depressed labourers in the harbour; quaymen in Hamburg were quite distinct from coal porters and trimmers. Rigid hierarchies configured the organisation of work as much as the labour-capital opposition, with Liverpool's „blue eyes“ and New Zealand's „Royals“ at the top of the respective pyramids and with gang leaders and foremen who were „quintessentially ambiguous figures.” Also, casual labour carried different connotations in a colonial context than it did in European locations; intriguingly, however, Mombasa's dockers were decasualised a full decade before their London peers.[134] Therefore Bruce Nelson cautions that it „is unlikely that we will unearth an all-encompassing logic of solidarity that crosses 'culture and time boundaries'.”[135]

Meanwhile, all contributions illustrate that the term 'revolution' for once is not overstated when it comes to the transformation of dock work. In the 1970s, containerisation changed the organisation of work entirely, replacing manual by mechanical, automated and increasingly computerised labour, shedding tens of thousands of jobs within a few years, and leading in some cases to the re-casualisation of workers whose unions were weakened or defunct.[136] To some degree studies

[132] Eric Taplin, The history of dock labour in Liverpool, 1850-1914, in: ibid., pp. 442-470; see also the vivid account by Brian Towers, Waterfront Blues. The Rise and Fall of Liverpool's Docklands, Lancaster: Carnegie, 2011.

[133] Colin J. Davis, New York City and London, in: Davies et al., Dock Workers, pp. 213-230, at 214f.; Robert Cherny, Longshoremen of San Francisco Bay, 1849-1960, in: ibid., pp. 102-140.

[134] Frederick Cooper, Dockworkers and labour history, in: ibid., pp. 527f., 531.

[135] Bruce Nelson, Ethnicity, race and the logic of solidarity: dock workers in international perspective, in: ibid., pp. 657-680, 680.

[136] Cf. Towers, Waterfront, pp. 286-297.

such as that of Durban's stevedores rehabilitate Henry Braverman's degradation thesis by showing how automation led to a loss of pride in the work. This does not imply that no-one benefited from technological change but that these benefits were highly unevenly distributed: „Flexible work may have its advantages for the highly qualified technicians of the information age, but it has extremely serious repercussions on industrial workers.”[137]

Glocal labour history: shop floor and transnational perspectives

Finally, both collections illustrate two major trends which go well beyond the subjects of textile or dock workers: shop floor history on the one hand, transnational and global perspectives on the other. With an eye to the former, Sam Davies' brief formula that a „dock is not a factory“[138], far from stating the obvious, reminds us that nothing determines labour more than the trade, the respective occupational qualifications, standards and routines, the spatial configuration of the workplace and the time regimes, the concrete activities performed, and the interaction of all individuals involved. Several recent studies delve deep into their sources, provide accurate descriptions of the work processes and analyse power relations on the shop floor level. Thomas Welskopp's comparative study of the US and German steel industries, 1860-1930, which understands the *Betrieb* – denoting company, factory, and shop floor alike – as a social system in which relations are continuously negotiated, was a pioneering effort in this genre.[139] On an empirical level, Welskopp's analysis of the 'crew system' – reminiscent

[137] Bernard Dubbeld, Breaking the Buffalo. The Transformation of Stevedoring Work in Durban between 1970 and 1990, in: IRSH 48 (2003), Suppl. 11, pp. 97-122, p. 118; cf. Greg Downey, Commentary: The Place of Labor in the History of Information-Technology Revolutions, in: ibid., pp. 225-261, pp. 238f. For recent criticism of Braverman see Kevin Whitston, Craftsmen and Skilled Workers in Engineering, 1914-64, in: LHR 76 (2011), pp. 207-226.

[138] Sam Davies, Employers and dock labour. Employment, work and industrial relations in international perspective, pp. 604-626, at p. 626.

[139] Thomas Welskopp, Arbeit und Macht im Hüttenwerk. Arbeits- und industrielle Beziehungen in der deutschen und amerikanischen Eisen- und Stahlindustrie von den 1860er bis zu den 1930er Jahren, Bonn 1994; cf. Plumpe, Mitbestimmung, p. 17.

of the analysis of dock workers' organisation in and by largely self-contained gangs – has been bolstered by Karl Lauschke's dense study of the Hoesch steel combine in Dortmund. Lauschke places production centre-stage and presents a multi-faceted picture of labour and labour relations in one of Germany's major steel works in the post-war period. His ethnographic depiction of the work process is sensitive to the manifold differences in working experiences in one and the same plant; the various hierarchies and generational differences at the workplace are analysed along with the corresponding patterns of education and discipline. Lauschke's study thus reconciles narratives of cooperation and companionship with those of competition and conflict instead of opting for either of the two. It also integrates the various protagonists of West German co-determination systematically into an analysis of the politics of and in production, outlining their contribution to the ambiguous effects of rationalisation and technological modernisation which questioned traditional career paths and opened additional opportunities. At least under the labour-friendly conditions of the boom years, Lauschke concludes, it was not the social system of the plant that adapted to new technologies but the new machinery which was adjusted to the specific social conditions on the shop floor.[140]

Studies such as these subscribe to an essentially dialectic understanding of how technology operates in society and involves various protagonists and stakeholders.[141] Oral history provides essential sources in understanding of how this process *practically* evolves.[142] Lauschke's findings are thus confirmed by a joint research project by sociologists and historians which depicts the gradual erosion of manual work, formal skills and tacit knowledge in steel production. Strikingly, many of the interviewees – a sample of former *Betriebsräte*

[140]Karl Lauschke, Die Hoesch-Arbeiter und ihr Werk. Sozialgeschichte der Dortmunder Westfalenhütte während der Jahre des Wiederaufbaus 1945-1966, Essen 2000.

[141]See Philip Scranton, The Workplace, Technology, and Theory in American Labor. History, in: ILWCH 35 (1989), pp. 3-22, and the debate in the same issue.

[142]Cf. Sabine Lichtenberger / Günter Müller (eds.), Arbeit ist das halbe Leben…Erzählungen vom Wandel der Arbeitswelten seit 1945, Wien 2012.

in the Ruhr industry – conceive of themselves and their work in terms of craft without, however, romanticising the arduous, taxing work at the blast furnaces and smelters. Also, the authors do not ignore that manual labour is not as gone as some proponents of 'tertiarisation' and 'sectoral change' contend.[143]

A photo volume of current production sites in Germany (whose selection criteria are opaque) displays a wide range of these manual labour processes: steel workers cleaning the blast furnaces with jackhammers as well as employees engaged in the production of ultrasonic sensors. Emblematically, the penultimate picture shows a pair of folded hands, dirty, chapped, and aged.[144] Meanwhile, one of the most methodologically avant-garde contributions to historical labour studies is an effort in digital re-enactment. Drawing on documents, pictures, and film stills, Alain Michel and his collaborators reconstruct a complete Renault work shop with assembly lines and staff by means of computerised 3-D models, literally offering new insights into production and rendering processes of manufacturing, their pace and their spatial setting more comprehensible.[145]

With regard to transnational and global history, the Ashgate anthologies illustrate how much may be gained from the recent surge in this field.[146] Both volumes depict how chains of production and

[143]Wolfgang Hindrichs / Uwe Jürgenhake / Christian Kleinschmidt, et al., Der lange Abschied vom Malocher. Sozialer Umbruch in der Stahlindustrie und die Rolle der Betriebsräte von 1960 bis in die neunziger Jahre, Essen 2000, pp. 30-33.

[144]Werner Bachmeier / Udo Achten, Arbeitswelten. Einblicke in einen nichtöffentlichen Raum, Essen: Klartext, 2010, pp. 50f., 162f., 220f. In another exhibition volume on work illustrations are mostly illustrative but accompanied by short academic essays: Hauptsache Arbeit. Wandel der Arbeitswelt nach 1945, Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung (ed.), Bielefeld 2009.

[145]Alain P. Michel, Travail à la chaîne. Renault 1898-1947, Boulogne 2007; Alain P. Michel / Stéphane Pouyllau, Du document visuel à la reconstitution virtuelle. L'image de synthèse des usines Renault de Billancourt pendant l'entre-deux-guerres, in: Bernard Lavédrine (ed.), Genres et usages de la photographie, Paris 2009, pp. 65-78.

[146]Since the late 1990s an abundance of programmatic articles, special issues and edited volumes has been published, advertising the potential of both global and transnational labour history, often without much differentiation between the two; see e.g. Andreas

consumption relate to industrial relations in textiles production and dock work. If the transnational implications of port labour are fairly obvious, those of seafaring trades are plain evident but with very contradictory effects. Helen Sampson and Bin Wu show how containerisation has affected seamen by compressing the time regime of maritime transport while at the same time keeping the sailors away from the actual harbours due to the seaward drift of terminals. In effect, for the very people who make transnational consumption happen, „transnationality is disappearing".[147] While research on sailors and dockers, textiles workers and different coalfield societies open new vistas in finding structural patterns across the boundaries of nation states, they also link up with each other and help identifying inter" , trans" , multi" , or supranational players; these may be multinational enterprises as in the car-manufacturing case studies of Loewendahl and Fetzer, or international organisations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO). The tripartite ILO has recently moved to the forefront of historical research as a laboratory and a multiplier of social-policy concepts and expertise which fed into national welfare state policies while receiving impulses from its members in turn. The scope of ILO activities has been documented by Daniel Maul's original study which argues that the organisation contributed significantly to decolonisation, development and human-rights discourses after World War Two.[148]

Finally, labour migration has emerged as a genuinely transnational field of labour history, in particular in Germany where so-called *Gastarbeiter* were recruited by the millions between the 1950s and the 1970s in order to sustain the 'economic miracle'. Historians have long conceived of foreign workers as the classical industrial reserve army, i.e. surplus labour which served as a buffer between boom and recession phases, and as objects of administrative policies bent on securing Germany's ethnic homogeneity.[149] While such interpretations are essentially correct they tend to underestimate the agency of migrants, partly because they assume a bird's eye view of the intentions and motivations, the living and working conditions of foreign workers. If this truly amounts to a „victimisation plot" as Hedwig and Ralf Richter have recently claimed on the basis of their research on Italian migrants at Wolfsburg, is a matter of debate.[150] Other results – both from migration studies[151] and labour history[152] – suggest that reactions to foreign workers were more often than not marked by indifference, discrimination or outright racism, improving only slowly and inconsistently. But with research on the migrant workers' daily lives patchy at best, much work needs to be done, in particular along comparative lines, if we are to have an adequate picture of what Ken Lunn has called the „complex encounters" of domestic and foreign workers.[153]

III. Cassandra's backdoor: multiple labour histories

Eckert, What is Global Labour History Good For?, in: Kocka, Work, pp. 169-181; Marcel van der Linden, Transnational Labour History. Explorations, Aldershot 2003, and the special issue LHR 74, No. 3 (2009).

[147] Helen Sampson / Bin Wu, Compressing Time and Constraining Space: The Contradictory Effects of ICT and Containerization on International Shipping Labour, in: IRSH 48, Suppl. 11, pp. 123-152, p. 148.

[148] Sandrine Kott / Joëlle Droux (eds.), Globalizing Social Rights. The International Labour Organization and Beyond, London 2013; Daniel Maul, Menschenrechte, Entwicklung und Dekolonisation – Die Internationale Arbeitsorganisation (IAO) 1940-1970, Essen 2007 (Engl.: Human Rights, Development and Decolonisation – The International Labour Organization (ILO) 1940-1970, London 2012.

[149] The continuities and correlations of migrant and forced labour regimes, obviously pertinent to the German case but also relevant in colonial contexts, are not explored here as this would explode the present article's scope.

[150] Hedwig Richter / Ralf Richter, Die Gastarbeiter-Welt. Leben zwischen Palermo und Wolfsburg, Paderborn 2012.

[151] Yvonne Rieker, Ein Stück Heimat findet man ja immer. Die italienische Einwanderung in die Bundesrepublik, Essen 2003; Karin Hunn, „Nächstes Jahr kehren wir zurück…". Die Geschichte der türkischen „Gastarbeiter" in der Bundesrepublik, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005; Jenny Pleinen, Die Migrationsregime Belgiens und der Bundesrepublik seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, Göttingen 2012.

[152] See e.g. Süß, Kumpel, pp. 344-351, or Schlemmer, Industriemoderne, pp. 288-290.

[153] Ken Lunn, Complex Encounters. Trade Unions, Immigration and Racism, in: Campbell / Fishman / McIlroy, High Tide, pp. 70-90.

Ten years after Jeffrey Cox's eulogy, Gerhard Schildt commented on the quantitative and qualitative gap between historical research on working-class formation on the one hand and that on its dissolution on the other. Overall, he concluded, post-war labour history was yet to be written.[154] Another two decades later the picture is less bleak although the working class has indeed lost much of its prominence – as an analytical category, not as a social phenomenon – and has been complemented by race and gender as key concepts which structure the social realm of labour.[155] In many respects this broader perspective has done labour history good as the choice of subjects, theoretical approaches and methodological tools now is far more diverse, offering a picture of work and working people which is more nuanced, more complex and more representative. Labour history covers histories of trade unions (of which we need more whatever history fashionistas may say), the theory and practice of industrial relations, analyses of welfare state policies and corporatist patterns but also feeds into the history of individual companies or whole industries. Shop-floor perspectives have gained more attention although their potential has merely been sketched, and promise a rich yield if applied more widely. The history of work cannot do without ethnographic, detailed and lively descriptions of actual work processes, workplaces, working conditions, and social relations at work. This is a major avenue for historians interested in work and working people (to whom they should talk more often). How helpful comparative angles may be in this venture has been shown by the proliferation of global history which, together with a growing appreciation of the transnational entanglements of production, consumption and industrial relations, is currently freeing labour history from the national straightjacket it has long worn. Surely no

[154] Schildt, Arbeiterschaft, p. 104.

[155] Cf. the observation that „the distinction between 'class' and 'socio-economic position' would be similar to the distinction many historians now recognize between 'gender' and 'sex"' by Jon Lawrence, The British Sense of Class, in: Journal of Contemporary History 35 (2000), pp. 307-318, 307, in discussing David Cannadine, Class in Britain, New Haven 1998.

one project can cover all of these themes even if some studies come close, e.g. Jean-Luc de Ochandiano's history of construction work in Lyon which also points to the benefits gained from integrating labour and urban (or rural) history.[156]

The absence of class, however, also has its downside as the common thread of the discipline has become thin and terminology ambiguous. Not only does labour history mean multiple things these days, its very vocabulary has changed. A history of workers in the twentieth century cannot but imply a history of employees, understood not as white collar but as wage labour, yet without excluding domestic and other unpaid labour. Unfortunately, this creates new problems, in particular what to do with managers or the self- and non-employed, and where to draw the lines. In all likelihood, strict typologies will be difficult to establish. That said, class is not altogether gone, it has just become very blurred. But then again, when wasn't it?

Surely, this will not ease disciplinary concerns about labour history's increasing fragmentation in terms of both its subject matter and its institutional status.[157] As Jürgen Kocka has observed, „it is not yet clear what the leading questions and viewpoints structuring the history of work as a general field of research might be".[158] And while rumours of the death of labour history have been greatly exaggerated, the discipline does not seem to have an obvious answer to the existential question of what it is – and how many. The state of the art suggests, however, that labour history as a field of research might thrive even without labour history as a discipline.

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[157] Cf. Lex Heerma van Voss, Whither Labour History? Histories of Labour: National and International Perspectives, in: IRSH 58 (2013), pp. 97-106; McIlroy, Waving; Bryan Palmer, Canada, in: Allen / Campbell / McIlroy, Histories of Labour, pp. 196-229, 218.

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