

**Globalizing Labour Historiography:**

**The IISH Approach**

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For a long time labour historians have worked on the assumption that working classes and labour movements are *national* entities. Labour historiography dealt with developments in separate countries, whether Austria or Australia. Labour historians recognized, of course, that labour movements worked together (or not) in “Internationals” and sometimes they even found it useful to contrast different national trends, but this in no way contradicted their “methodological nationalism”.<sup>1</sup>

Gradually, this began to change. From the 1960s cross-border collaboration between labour historians intensified significantly, starting with the ITH’s foundation in 1965. From the 1980s the instances in which labour historians worked together in international and comparative research projects multiplied. Almost at the same time a boom of historical migration studies developed, exploring transnational processes of working-class formation. And finally, the 1990s witnessed an impressive growth of labour historiography in Africa, Asia and Latin America that definitely put an end to the quasi-monopoly of metropolitan labour historians. These various trends make a reconceptualization unavoidable. For too long have we worked with a predominantly North-Atlantic bias. What we need now is a “methodological transcontinentalization or globalization”.

During the last five to ten years the International Institute of Social History (IISH) in Amsterdam has been working on such a globalization. The following notes are intended to give an impression of our ongoing re-orientation.<sup>2</sup>

### *1. A provisional definition of global labour history*

Our aim is to build a “global labour history”. What do we mean by this concept? I suggest a provisional five-point definition.

(i) Global labour history is not a theory to which everyone must adhere, but a field of attention. We know and accept the fact that our conceptions of research and our interpretative frameworks can differ. Not only is this pluralism inevitable, it can equally well be intellectually stimulating – provided we are at all times prepared to enter into a serious discussion of our disparate views. Notwithstanding our different points of departure, however, we must also strive to work productively in the same fields of research.

1. On this see: Marcel van der Linden and Lex Heerma van Voss, “Introduction”, in: Lex Heerma van Voss and Marcel van der Linden (eds), *Class and Other Identities. Gender, Religion and Ethnicity in the Writing of European Labour History* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn, 2002), 1-39; Marcel van der Linden, “Transnationalizing American Labor History”, *Journal of American History*, 86 (1999), 1078-92.
2. The following paragraphs are based on a keynote speech delivered at a conference celebrating the IISH’s 65th anniversary in November 2000. Extensive information on the IISH’s holdings and activities can be found through its website <[www.iisg.nl](http://www.iisg.nl)>.

(ii) Global labour history means the transnational and even the transcontinental study of labour relations and workers' social movements in the broadest sense of the word. By "transnational" we mean the placing in a wider context of all historical processes, no matter how geographically "small", by means of comparison with processes elsewhere, the study of interaction processes, or a combination of the two.

(iii) The study of labour relations encompasses work that is both free and unfree, paid and unpaid. Workers' social movements consist of both formal organizations and informal activities. The study of both labour relations and social movements requires that equally serious attention be devoted to "the other side" (employers, public authorities).

(iv) The study of labour relations concerns not only the individual worker but also his/her family. Gender relations play an important part within the family and in labour relations involving individual family members.

(v) Global labour history primarily concerns the study of labour relations and workers' social movements which have evolved along with the growth of the world market since the 14th century. Wherever indicated, for instance for comparative purposes, studies going back further in time are by no means excluded however.

## *2. Units and levels of analysis*

Little methodology has as yet been developed in global labour studies. One of our most important tasks in the coming years is to remedy this situation. This being the case, a few remarks about two major aspects, namely the units and levels of analysis, must necessarily suffice here.

Generally speaking, labour historians have grown up with the idea that the nation state is the logical unit of analysis. Most of us have specialized in the working-class history of a particular country, like the USA, Argentina, the Netherlands or whatever. Even those amongst us who are engaged in comparative studies usually stay within these bounds. There are numerous studies comparing labour movements or particular aspects thereof in two or three countries. There is nothing amiss with this approach so long as the historian concerned is fully aware of the fact that the nation state is itself a historical product to be explained and placed in perspective. The difficulty is that this is not how we were taught to view it, but rather that the world consisted of interacting national communities. As Immanuel Wallerstein has rightly pointed out, this is a 19th-century fiction: "It reifies and therefore crystallizes social phenomena whose real significance lies not in their solidity but precisely in their fluidity and malleability".<sup>3</sup> From the point of view of global

3. Immanuel Wallerstein, "Societal Development, or Development of the World-System?", *International Sociology*, 1 (1986), 3-17, 9. See also Roland Axtmann, "Society, Globalization and the Comparative Method", *History of the Human Sciences*, 6, 2 (1993), 53-74.

labour history, it seems more logical to proceed from the premise that all people who influence one another's social lives belong to the same society. "Society" thereupon becomes a global entity in which by reason of migration, commodity flows, wars, etc. people in different regions are in contact with one another (and there are also people who do not belong to the global society because their own society is isolated from it). *Within* this global society individual nation states seek to incorporate the inhabitants of their own territories into their own particular systems.

Before going any further, let me try to clear two misunderstandings out of the way. First, in arguing for the transnational society as a framework for our studies I am certainly not saying that labour historians should all henceforth concern themselves with transcontinental subjects. I would almost say: quite the opposite! For the challenge is precisely that of linking together micro- and macro-history. The author of a monograph on a mining village in Bolivia, Poland or Belgium can make an innovative contribution to global labour history by doing one of two things. Either (s)he can show that the movement in that village has multiple links with the outside world through migrants in its midst from nearby or distant parts, through the fact that the local coal mine is incorporated in a transnational chain of economic processes, or through the integration of the religion of the majority of the miners and their families in the transnational hierarchy of the Catholic church, to mention just a few possibilities. Or (s)he can compare aspects of the movement in one village with similar movements in villages elsewhere, and thus determine what they have in common and what is specific to each individual movement.

To prevent a second misunderstanding, let me say that acceptance of the concept of the global society does not imply that labour historians can no longer legitimately compare national developments. The comparative method remains extremely useful, also in the study of national similarities and differences. But only on one condition, which is this: the researcher must be fully aware of the fact that a comparison of this kind carries with it the implicit assumption that separate national processes are causally independent. This assumption is of course wrong, and if this is properly understood then at least the so-called error of contamination can be avoided. We speak of contamination when one process has caused similar changes in different cases. Suppose we wanted to determine why anarchism was influential in the early 20th-century labour movement in both Argentina and Spain. We could do so only if we knew there was a process of historical diffusion from Spain to its former colony which would partly – though obviously not completely – explain Argentine anarchism. The error of contamination would occur if we were unaware of such a diffusion process and Argentina and Spain were regarded as independent units. As Stanley Lieberon has rightly observed, "We would not think much of a biological experiment where laboratory animals injected with some disease-causing virus were compared with control animals placed close enough to catch the disease through contagion. Yet in point of fact that is precisely the problem in many social research studies."<sup>4</sup> If the problem of contamination is not recognized, "case-stretching" results, i.e. more cases are presented as exhibiting a certain phenomenon than is actually so.

4. Lieberon, *Making It Count. The Improvement of Social Research and Theory* (Berkeley [etc.]: University of California Press, 1985), 57.

Against this background, four types of analysis can be distinguished, irrespective of how the unit of analysis is defined.<sup>5</sup>

(i) Contrasting comparisons reveal similarities and differences between two or more instances. Researchers remain at the level of the observations, but on the basis of these they can nevertheless attempt to draw up a classification, typology or taxonomy of the cases<sup>6</sup> and put forward hypotheses to explain possible causal relationships. Most comparative labour historians are involved in making contrasting comparisons. Following James Jasper, we could describe efforts of this kind as ideographic comparisons.<sup>7</sup> Some believe that herein lies the most important function of comparisons. Hugh Stretton, for example, writes that “Comparison is strongest as a choosing and provoking, not a proving device: a system for questioning, not for answering”.<sup>8</sup>

(ii) Testing comparisons aim to test hypotheses, typologies, etc: “They control (verify or falsify) whether generalizations hold across the cases to which they apply”.<sup>9</sup>

(iii) Studies of interactions might also be termed studies of contamination, aimed as they are at discovering how the same hidden influences were operative in two or more instances.

(iv) Integrating studies combine the results of both testing comparisons and studies of interactions into a causal narrative that seeks to expose the relationship between developments in different countries or regions. They bear a close resemblance to what Marc Bloch has termed “historical comparisons”: “This is to make a parallel study of societies that are at once neighbouring and contemporary, exercising a constant mutual influence, exposed throughout their development to the action of the same broad causes just because they are close and contemporaneous, and owing

5. I develop this theme much further in my forthcoming book *Transnational Labour History: Explorations* (Aldershot [etc.]: Ashgate, 2003).

6. A fundamental discussion of the differences between these concepts is to be found in Alberto Marradi, “Classification, Typology, Taxonomy”, *Quality and Quantity*, 24 (1990), 129-57.

7. James M. Jasper, “Two or Twenty Countries: Contrasting Styles of Comparative Research”, *Comparative Social Research*, 10 (1987), 205-29. Jasper argues that the nomothetic (“empiricist”) and the ideographic approaches “stop at different moments in the continual process of refining variables: the empiricist approach when the same variable can be isolated or measured in each country, the ideographic approach when differences in the variables have been uncovered.” (210-11).

8. Hugh Stretton, *The Political Sciences: General Principles of Selection in Social Science and History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 247.

9. Giovanni Sartori, “Comparing and Miscomparing”, *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 3 (1991), 243-57, 244.

their existence in part at least to a common origin.”<sup>10</sup> Such reconstructions have the dual advantage of “directly taking account of the interconnectedness of ostensibly separate experiences and providing a strong incentive to ground analyses explicitly in the historical contexts of the structures and processes they include”.<sup>11</sup> The theory behind them is not as yet very highly developed<sup>12</sup> and few attempts have been made to apply the theory in practice.

### 3. What has already been done?

A considerable amount of preliminary work in global labour history has been carried out, but much of it tends to be Eurocentric, mainly for political and cultural reasons, but also because the quantity of data available is not the same for all regions. For the historian who wants to use secondary sources, it is obviously important that such sources exist. If the history of a particular working-class or labour movement has barely yet been studied, it is tempting to leave that case out of the sample. In practice, this often results in the exclusion of former communist countries or Third World countries. But fortunately there are some recent developments pointing in a different direction.

We can begin by looking at what Ira Katznelson has termed the first level of class analysis, viz. *class structures*, the broad structural patterns of capitalist economic development (business structures, family patterns, demography, state organization and policies, cultural traditions).<sup>13</sup> There is a substantial body of quantitative material, although its reliability is frequently open to doubt. As far back as 1913, Robert René Kuczynski published his monumental *Arbeitslohn und Arbeitszeit in Europa und Amerika, 1870-1909*.<sup>14</sup> Since then extensive databases have been established, the majority of which, however, are restricted to North America and Western

10. Marc Bloch, “A Contribution Towards a Comparative History of European Societies”, in: idem, *Land and Work in Mediaeval Europe: Selected Papers*. Trans. J.E. Anderson (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 47-8.
11. Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984), 147.
12. The first attempt was by Philip McMichael, “Incorporating Comparison Within a World-Historical Perspective: An Alternative Comparative Method”, *American Sociological Review*, 55 (1990), 385-97.
13. Ira Katznelson, “Working-Class Formation: Constructing Cases and Comparisons”, in Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg (eds), *Working-Class Formation: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 3-41, 14-15.
14. Berlin: Springer, 1913. For a further elaboration of this theme, see also Carl von Tyszka, *Löhne und Lebenskosten in Westeuropa im 19. Jahrhundert (Frankreich, England, Spanien, Belgien)* (Munich [etc.]: Duncker & Humblot, 1914).

Europe.<sup>15</sup> But attention is now gradually being devoted to the Third World as well, as exemplified by the most recent edition of B.R. Mitchell's *International Historical Statistics*, which also covers Latin America, Africa and Asia.<sup>16</sup> Another example is the database at the Fernand Braudel Center in Binghamton, containing information on upwards of 80,000 instances of labour unrest around the globe.<sup>17</sup> The situation is nonetheless still very one-sided. The analysis of quantitative data, for instance, continues to be focused much more heavily on the advanced capitalist countries than on the rest of the world.<sup>18</sup> The Belgian-Swiss historian Paul Bairoch, a pioneer of the non-Eurocentric approach, thus far remains a solitary figure.<sup>19</sup>

Moving on to the other levels defined by Katznelson (class-based ways of life, class dispositions, and collective action) – the levels generally classed as labour history in the narrower sense<sup>20</sup> – we discern a highly promising development. This is not the place for an extensive overview, but it may be stated that the historiography of the working classes in Asia, Africa and Latin America has made huge strides over the past twenty years. John French's recent article on the "Latin American Labor Studies Boom" is of significance in this respect.<sup>21</sup> And also as regards African and Asian labour history, many notable contributions have appeared since the 1970s (though it must be added that some countries receive considerably more attention than others).

The work at all analytical levels is still largely unfocused on transnational interactions and testing comparisons. In so far as research does deal with two or more countries, it is usually either contrasting or additive: in the one country the one, and in the other country the other. More

15. For example, Peter Flora *et al.*, *State, Economy and Society in Western Europe 1815-1975* (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus, 1983), 2 vols.
16. B.R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics*. Vol.I: *Europe, 1750-1988* (3rd edn, Basingstoke [etc.]: Macmillan, 1992); Vol.II: *The Americas 1750-1988* (2nd edn, Basingstoke [etc.]: Macmillan, 1993); Vol.III, *Africa and Asia* (Basingstoke [etc.]: Macmillan, 1982).
17. Beverly J. Silver, Giovanni Arrighi and Melvyn Dubofsky (eds), "Labor Unrest in the World Economy, 1870-1990", *Review*, 18 (1995), 1-206.
18. A typical example is Jürgen Kuczynski's impressive 40-part study, *Die Geschichte der Lage der Arbeiter unter dem Kapitalismus* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1960-72). Twenty volumes deal with Germany, five with England, three with the United States and three with France. Separate volumes cover Shanghai, the British dominions (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa) and the British colonies.
19. P. Bairoch and J.-M. Limbor, "Changes in the Industrial Distribution of the World Labour Force, by Region, 1880-1960", *International Labour Review*, 98 (1968), 311-336; Paul Bairoch, "Structure de la population active mondiale de 1700 à 1970", *Annales E.S.C.*, 26 (1971), 960-976.
20. Katznelson, "Working-Class Formation", 16-20.
21. *International Review of Social History*, 45 (2000), 279-308.

penetrating analysis and theory building are as yet in their infancy, even though some very interesting beginnings have been made by Charles Bergquist, Frederick Cooper and Steve Smith, among others.<sup>22</sup>

#### 4. What should we do soon?

##### a. New concepts

The majority of labour history's core categories stem from the late 19th century and should accordingly be reconsidered. Take, for example, the concept of "working class". I have seriously attempted elsewhere to show that this concept is the result of a complex process of social exclusion in which one group of wage earners with a relatively high status distances itself from other groups like self-employed workers, so-called lumpen proletarians and unfree workers.<sup>23</sup>

The new labour history beginning to flourish in the semi-peripheral countries would appear to contain three important lessons which are also of essential significance for metropolitan labour history. In the first place, the new proletariat of the Third World consists only in part of free wage earners as Marx conceived of them, i.e. "free in the double sense that as a free individual he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity, and that, on the other hand, he has no other commodity for sale".<sup>24</sup> In the semi-periphery, the majority of wage earners do not freely dispose of their own labour power (for example, because they are burdened by debt) or they are not in a formal contractual relationship with their employers.

"Pure" wage workers are abstractions generated by the classical "labour-movement Marxism". The semi-periphery makes this clear in a second respect as well, for wage labour there

22. Charles Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America. Comparative Essays on Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986); Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society. The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge [etc.]: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Steve A. Smith, „Workers and Supervisors: St. Petersburg 1906-1917 and Shanghai 1895-1927", *Past and Present*, 139 (May 1993), 131-77; idem, „Class and Gender: Women's Strikes in St. Petersburg 1895-1917 and Shanghai 1895-1927", *Social History*, 19 (1994), 141-68; idem, „Workers, the Intelligentsia and Marxist Parties, St. Petersburg 1895-1917 and Shanghai, 1921-27", *International Review of Social History*, 41 (1996), 1-56.

23. Marcel van der Linden, "Working Classes, History of", in: Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (eds), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Oxford [etc.]: Elsevier Science, 2001), vol. 24, 16579-83. See also: idem, „El fin der eurocentrismo y el futuro de la historia del trabajo: o por qué debemos y podemos reconceptualizar la clase obrera“, in: Javier Paniagua, José A. Piqueras and Vicent Sanz (eds), *Cultura social y política en el mundo del trabajo* (Valencia: UNED, 1999), 301-22, and Shahid Amin and Marcel van der Linden (eds), „Peripheral“ Labour? *Studies in the History of Partial Proletarianization* (Cambridge [etc.]: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

24. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 272.

is integrated throughout in households and families whose survival always remains partly dependent on subsistence labour (performed chiefly, but not exclusively, by women), on the independent production of commodities for the market and suchlike. In many cases the “roles” of the various family members are not permanently fixed, but instead signify a transient social relationship which can be changed quite quickly by other sources of income. Not individuals but households and families are therefore the best point of departure for social-historical analyses.

Thirdly, the new proletariat does not exist exclusively or even mainly in the industrial sector. The agricultural sphere is proportionately more important in that in this sphere rapidly advancing proletarianization has created a large stratum of agricultural labourers and share tenants. Charles Bergquist is rightly critical of studies that posit “a separate set of assumptions and predicted behavior for rural workers (often viewed as ‘traditional peasants’) and industrial workers (the ‘modern proletariat’)”. In his view, this “clumsy” dichotomy is not applicable to Latin America. “How did one classify, for example, workers in rural Cuban sugar complexes or miners in highland Peru who moved in and out of traditional agriculture? It is only when this conceptual dichotomy, artificial to the history of workers in the underdeveloped world, is set aside and a new category of analysis is put in its place that the meaning of the labor history of Latin America fully reveals itself.”<sup>25</sup> The militant movement of workers who occupy the land in Brazil (the *trabalhadores rurais sem terra*) demonstrates this just as clearly as the struggles in Gujarat and the Philippines. Besides the agrarian sector, services comprise another important element: domestic workers today constitute a more numerous army of migrants whose history has barely yet been touched.

We may thus conclude that the “authentic” working class is largely a fiction. The “classical” proletariat is surrounded by, and intermingled with, a variegated “semi-proletariat” of peddlers, sharecroppers, home workers, prostitutes, self-employed workers, beggars and scavengers. The boundaries between the different social segments are fluid, and this also finds expression in their forms of organization. In India and South Africa, women who work in the informal sector (so-called “survivalists”) have set up their own trade unions aimed at achieving the standard of living of “real” workers. The great Bolivian Workers’ Confederation COB encompasses not just miners (who traditionally supply the general secretary), but also street peddlars, students, peasants and small producers.

The dynamic of the social struggles in the semi-periphery remains incomprehensible if no attention is given to such structural hybrid forms. The social history of the „Third World“ demands that we think again and think rigorously about the concept of “working class”. Once we have done that, a renewal of metropolitan labour history will become possible as well.

#### b. *New research questions*

A transnational approach invites us to pose new research questions. Its further elaboration is one

25. Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America*, 8. Bergquist adds: “The primary object of early-twentieth-century Latin American labor history should be workers in export production”.

of the most important tasks awaiting us in the next few years. Some initial steps have already been taken over the past twenty years. I have a few suggestions to put forward, but there are undoubtedly many more still to be formulated.

(i) The transnational study of occupational groups, such as the project, coordinated by Lex Heerma van Voss and others, relating to the comparative history of dock workers whose results have recently been published in the form of a sizeable book.<sup>26</sup> More such global projects can be envisaged, dealing not just with “workers” in terms of classical labour history (e.g. workers in the metal and textile industries, or the building trade) but extending to totally different occupational groups, such as street peddlers, domestic servants, prostitutes, and so on.

ii) The study of transnational relations between modes of labour control. To the best of my knowledge, this has not yet been attempted. What I mean here is research based on the “commodity chain” concept which has appeared in various guises since the 1960s (the French *filière* approach), gaining international recognition in the 1990s through the work of Gary Gereffi and Miguel Korzeniewicz.<sup>27</sup> Christopher Chase-Dunn defines a commodity chain as “a tree-like sequence of production processes and exchanges by which a product for final consumption is produced. These linkages of raw materials, labor, the sustenance of labor, intermediate processing, final processing, transport, and final consumption materially connect most of the people within the contemporary world system.”<sup>28</sup> The core idea is very simple, following on from the theory-building on “industry columns” in earlier economic theory: every commodity is produced through a “combination” of labour power and means of production in a production process. The means of production are themselves the product of a combination of labour power and means of production. And the carriers of labour power consume commodities like clothing

26. Sam Davies *et al.* (eds), *Dock Workers. International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790-1970*, two volumes (Aldershot [etc.]: Ashgate, 2000). See also Frank Broeze, “Militancy and Pragmatism. An International Perspective on Maritime Labour, 1870-1914”, *International Review of Social History*, 36 (1991), 165-200.

27. Before that, in the 1980s, Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein integrated the concept in their world system theory. See their “Commodity Chains in the World Economy Prior to 1800”, *Review*, 10, 1 (1986), 157-170. Gereffi and Korzeniewicz subsequently tested the concept in a contemporary study: “Commodity Chains and Footwear Exports in the Semiperiphery”, in William G. Martin (ed.), *Semiperipheral States in the World Economy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990). The breakthrough came with the volume of essays edited by Gereffi and Korzeniewicz, *Commodity Chains and Global Capitalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994). Of course empirical studies of commodity chains were already in existence years before the concept was coined. See, for example, the detailed study of the cotton commodity chain in A. Oppel, *Die Baumwolle nach Geschichte, Anbau, Verarbeitung und Handel, sowie nach ihrer Stellung im Volksleben und in der Staatswirtschaft* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1902), 745 pp.

28. Christopher Chase-Dunn, *Global Formation: Structures of the World Economy* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 346.

and food which in turn are produced by combinations of labour power and means of production. In brief, the final production process from which an end product emerges is simply the last link in a series of chains of production processes. This conception has hitherto functioned as a source of inspiration for contemporary economists in particular, who amongst other things have researched tourism, the services sector, fresh fruit and vegetables, cocaine, footwear, electronics, automobiles and semiconductors. Up to the present, few historical case studies have appeared. I know of only two examples, both of which (on shipbuilding and grain flour, 1590-1790) are markedly economically oriented.<sup>29</sup> Theory-building is likewise heavily concentrated on economic aspects, and specifically on present-day globalization.<sup>30</sup> I would say that here we have a tremendous challenge for labour historians.

(iii) The transnational study of forms of collective action. Among the examples which spring to mind in this context are the large-scale projects on the formation of labour movements which the IISH has organized, and publications on the history of revolutionary syndicalist trade unions and of mutual benefit societies.<sup>31</sup> Criticism may be levelled at these earlier projects, chiefly because they lean too far towards additive historiography, simply placing different national trajectories side by side and failing to study them as manifestations of wider social, cultural and political processes. On the other hand, an interesting attempt at a global history of labour unrest has been made by researchers at the Fernand Braudel Center in Binghamton, New York. In the early 1980s, they established that “distinct waves of labor militancy” had existed worldwide, notably at the end of the two world wars and around 1970. In order to analyse the global patterns in labour militancy since the 1870s, they took four steps: (1) a content analysis of a number of periodicals and yearbooks designed to obtain information on strikes in all parts of the world; (2) the compilation of indices based on this information (world-level and zone-level [periphery, semiperiphery, core]); (3) comparison of these indices with others derived from national statistical data collections; (4) explication of the worldwide patterns, with particular emphasis on the periods and epicentra of unrest and the degree of politicization.<sup>32</sup>

29. Y. Eyüp Özveren, “Shipbuilding, 1590-1790”, *Review*, 23 (2000), 15-86; Sheila Pelizzon, “Grain Flour, 1590-1790”, *Review*, 23 (2000), 87-195.

30. For an overview, see Philip Raikes, Michael Friis Jensen and Stefano Ponte, “Global Commodity Chain Analysis and the French *filière* Approach: Comparison and Critique”, *Economy and Society*, 29 (2000), 390-417.

31. Marcel van der Linden and Jürgen Rojahn (eds), *The Formation of Labour Movements, 1870-1914: An International Perspective*, 2 vols. (Leiden [etc.]: Brill, 1990); Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe (eds), *Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990); Marcel van der Linden (ed.), *Social Security Mutualism: The Comparative History of Mutual Benefit Societies* (Berne [etc.]: Peter Lang Academic, 1996).

32. Silver, Arrighi and Dubofsky, “Labour Unrest in the World Economy, 1870-1990”. See also Research Working Group on World Labor, “Global Patterns of Labor Movements in Historical Perspective”, *Review*, 10 (1986), 137-155, and the assessments in Alvin Y. So,

c. *New instruments: transnational databases*

It is evident that global labour history is in need of new databases. I see here two closely interconnected tasks. On the one hand, the collection of large quantities of quantitative and qualitative data on such themes as the structure of the world labour force, real wages, demographic developments and workers' movements; and on the other, the development of techniques making it possible to compare data gathered from different contexts.<sup>33</sup>

d. *New organizational forms*

Global labour history is a difficult subject, requiring as it does both a knowledge of different situations and considerable analytical ability. In exceptional cases one individual may succeed in gaining an in-depth knowledge of several cases and in convincingly interpreting that knowledge. But this type of individual – with Max Weber as the prototype – is rare, and as the body of knowledge grows their number will rapidly shrink still further.

Over the past ten to fifteen years a number of new approaches to organizing transnational labour history have been explored. They seem to be of two types. The first is the *collective model*, whereby several national specialists collaborate on a comparative research project. As far as I know, this method was first put into practice by the Australian and Canadian labour history associations, which formed teams of researchers to investigate a particular aspect of the labour history of both countries and to co-write a report.<sup>34</sup> The same approach was adopted on a somewhat larger scale at a recent conference in Paris (1995) called *L'invention du syndicalisme*, involving small groups of three or more national specialists who worked together

*Social Change and Development: Modernization, Dependency, and World-System Theories* (Newbury Park [etc.]: Sage, 1990), 212-218, and in Marcel van der Linden, "Global Labor History and 'the Modern World System'. Thoughts at the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Fernand Braudel Center", *International Review of Social History*, 46 (2001), 423-59.

33. At the IISH Jan Luiten van Zanden is currently preparing a website with historical data on wages and prices for all countries (see <[www.iisg.nl/hpw](http://www.iisg.nl/hpw)>). Marco van Leeuwen is, together with Ineke Maas, Andrew Miles and others, working on a Historical Standard Classification of Occupations. They recently published: *HISCO: Historical Standard Classification of Occupations* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002).
34. The results were published in a joint special issue of the Canadian journal *Labour/Le Travail*, 38 (Fall 1996), and the Australian journal *Labour History*, 71 (November 1996). The project was prepared in: Gregory S. Kealey and Greg Patmore (eds), *Canadian and Australian Labour History: Towards a Comparative Perspective* (Sydney: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, and St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1990).

and produced a joint report.<sup>35</sup> This model has proved to be very useful, but it can succeed only if the team members use a common theoretical framework.

A second approach is the *project model* involving the comparison of national reports each written by one member of a group of specialists. For such a comparison to be made, each specialist must stick closely to a list of points agreed in advance. The comparison itself can be made by the specialists during a workshop; alternatively, on the basis of a division of labour, it can be left to one or more “specialized comparativists”. Examples of this approach include a project on the comparative history of mutual benefit societies organized in Amsterdam,<sup>36</sup> the congress “The European Sailor, 1570-1870”,<sup>37</sup> and the “Women and European Social Democracy During the Interwar Years” project.<sup>38</sup>

Both forms of organization could be developed further because so far they have tended to remain at the stage of contrasting comparisons – a stage in which less intellectual discipline is required than with testing comparisons. At any event, it is obvious that teamwork will be able to contribute much to the progress of comparative labour history – though there will always be excellent scholars who work entirely on their own.

35. Jean-Louis Robert, Friedhelm Boll and Antoine Prost (eds), *L'invention des syndicalismes. Le syndicalisme en Europe occidentale à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Sorbonne, 1997).

36. The project resulted in the conference *Un passé riche d'avenir* (Paris, 1-3 December 1992) and a book: van der Linden, *Social Security Mutualism*.

37. The Hague/ Amsterdam, 19-22 October 1994. See Paul C. van Royen, Jaap R. Bruijn and Jan Lucassen (eds), “*Those Emblems of Hell*”? *European Sailors and the Maritime Labour Market, 1570-1870 = Research in Maritime History*, vol. 13 (St. John: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1997).

38. The results have been published as: Helmut Gruber and Pamela Graves (eds), *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women* (New York [etc.]: Berghahn, 1998).