

# The causes and consequences of changing labour relations in African societies

Venerdì 23 settembre / Friday 23 September

10.45-13.15 (I sess.)

14.15-16.00 (II sess.)

16.15-18.00 (III sess.)

**CONVENOR:** Stefano BELLUCCI (IIHS-International Institute of Social History-Amsterdam, and Leiden University, NL), Maxim BOLT (University of Birmingham, UK and WISER, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa)

**CHAIR:** Stefano BELLUCCI (IIHS and Leiden University), Ann E. McDOUGALL (University of Alberta, CAN), Maxim Bolt (University of Birmingham and WISER)

**DISCUSSANT:** Jan-Bart GEWALD (Leiden University), Bill FREUND (University of Kwazulu-Natal and University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa)

**ABSTRACT:** “Conflict” is one of the general themes of the IV Conference of the ASAI in 2016. This panel will present papers on issues related to “social” conflict in Africa, with a particular focus on labour. Placing labour conflict at centre-stage through a historical materialist approach has declined generally, and specifically in the field of African studies, but it is now slowly but steadily re-emerging as a consequence of a global *remise en cause* of capitalism.

As Andreas Eckert put it, in Africa, the 20th century was the century of wage labour. Although it is probably true that wage workers were not the majority in Africa during that century, it is undeniable that the 20th century saw a notable surge in people employed as wage workers. Many scholars equate this with the rise of the capitalist mode of production and capitalism in Africa.

The fact that wage labour emerged as an important form of labour relations begs several crucial questions. This panel explores these, building on rich scholarship across several disciplines. Why and how did wage labour emerge? What is the history not only of workers, but also of capitalist employers? What effects did wage work have on existing social arrangements (including the family) – more or less social security? How were household, tributary and slavery systems affected by the coming of wage labour? And, finally, how should we understand unemployment and consequent migration in relation to the transition in labour relations and the uneven relationship existing between workers and capital?

## PAPERS:

**I sess. (10.45-13.15): Societies and politics of labour in 20th Century Western and Southern Africa**

**Chair:** Stefano BELLUCCI

**Discussant:** Jan-Bart GEWALD

**Bill FREUND – Nicolas PONS-VIGNON, *Precarity in post-apartheid South Africa***

**ABSTRACT:** The prevalence of labour precarity in the contemporary capitalist world is becoming a major theme in social science literature and notably with regard to South Africa post-apartheid. It is often treated in conjunction with poverty studies and poverty alleviation. This paper intends instead to focus rather on precarity as a structural road in political economy with a variety of implications. South African labour situations typically include a mixture of precarity and more secure work fragmenting workers, for instance

in the richly detailed analysis of Franco Barchiesi writing on the East Rand and in observations of mines labour on the Platinum Belt with obvious relevance to the massacre of striking workers at Marikana and the agricultural workers in parts of the Western Cape both in 2012. We intend also to make use of Pons-Vignon's Paris thesis on forestry workers and contractors. South African analyses often take the position, generally supportive of business initiatives that so-called labour flexibility needs to be diffused in order to make for a more plentiful if poorly-paid labour force and that the worker should be as much as possible an individual contractor selling his individual labour power as dearly as he or she can. This paper will contest this view. While we are in support of state intervention to limit precarity, we also observe the failure of the Congress of South African Trade Unions to take it on. Union membership has not expanded and union members often find themselves in very oppressive situations.

**PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL PROPONENTE:**

Nicolas Pons-Vignon (senior researcher in the School of Economic & Business Sciences (SEBS) at the University of the Witwatersrand)

Bill Freund (professor emeritus of African history at the University of KwaZulu-Natal)

**Miriam DI PAOLA**, *The South African labour movement between conflict and compromise. The case of NUMSA*

**ABSTRACT:** The National Union of metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) was formed in 1987 through the merge of four unions from the engineering, motor, steel, energy, and auto. Different political traditions, from trotskysm to nationalism were part of the NUMSA milieu since its onset but in the trade union movement at large NUMSA was positioned towards the so called 'workerist' side characterized by a strong class consciousness and the centrality of worker control in the struggle for liberation. At the other end of the trade union movement spectrum were positioned the so called 'populist' unions which would see their struggle firstly as a struggle against the minority rule as conceptualised by the African National Congress. The populists won the ideological battle at the time and by the end of the 1980s COSATU was part of an alliance with the ANC and SACP which in 1994 became the ruling alliance.

NUMSA remained loyal to the Alliance although at times recalcitrantly throughout the 1990s despite the adoption of very restrictive macroeconomic policies which moved the economy further away from industrialisation and towards finance thus weakening the very base of NUMSA constituency.

In the two decades of democracy while important goals have been achieved in labour laws the triple crisis of poverty, unemployment and inequality has been virtually deepening while political unrest has been dramatically increasing since the mid-2000s. The labour movement has undergone a crisis of representation and its leaders have been accused by their own members of selling out the cause of the workers for their own political and economic interest while the ruling party has become the target of social unrest, particularly at the local level. The Marikana massacre could be understood as the ultimate and most tragic result of a generalised crisis of representation.

In 2013, NUMSA took the decision to break from the alliance to go back to the Freedom Charter and advance the struggle for a socialist South Africa. This paper aims at exploring the reasons of this historical decision and the extent to which NUMSA is embracing a truly revolutionary role in the political battle for the heart of the country.

**PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL PROPONENTE:**

Miriam Di Paola is a PhD student at the Centre for Researching Education and Labour, at Wits University and a consultant for the ILO, the PSI and other international organizations. Her research interests are labour and development, skills formation and distribution and labour markets, labour migration.

**Pierluigi VALSECCHI**, *Slaves and their masters. Changing social relations in early 20th Century South-West Ghana*

**ABSTRACT:** Slavery was abolished in the Gold Coast (current Ghana) in 1874, soon after the proclamation of the British

Colony. However the acquisition of persons in a state of extreme dependency – slaves or human pawns - by individuals and communities went on well into the twentieth century. There are cases in which considerable flows of enslaved people from the North engrafted into the landscape of twentieth century Gold Coast compact communities with recognizable slave origins that are nevertheless perceived as full parts of the deeper local identity.

The paper focus on one of these cases, which was particularly remarkable for the number of enslaved persons involved, and led to the creation of an entire new set of settlements within the Paramountcy of Atuabo (Eastern Nzema) during the early decades of the twentieth century. In 1899-1901 over 150 war prisoners were bought in the North by an enterprising individual belonging to the Stool family of Ampain. He employed his new dependents in setting up a rubber plantation and cultivating rice on a large scale. At the same time he allowed them to work their own individual farms. The life and history of these slave settlements were shaped by the effects of a radically changed position of slaves in society in post-abolition years. For these communities, absorption into the master's group was not the final result of a long transition based on selection and adaptation involving the individual slaves as in the past, but rather the rapid formalization of a full adoption of the entire group of slaves into the kinship structure of the hosting community: a process which in the past was reserved to groups of foreigners applying to the Stool for allegiance and land to settle. The slaves bought in the north were accorded treatment as free newcomers, thus formally dissembling and circumventing their actual bonded status, which was unacceptable according to the laws of the British Gold Coast. The slaves became immigrants by applying for membership in the Nzema society. The pace of integration was exceptionally fast and successful and these people came to play crucial roles in what became an important agricultural district in the 1920s-1930s.

**PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL PROPONENTE:**

Pierluigi Valsecchi is Professor of African History at the University of Pavia. He has worked on Ghanaian History and is the author of articles and books, including *Power and State Formation in West Africa. Appolonia from the 16th to the 18th Century* (2011). His current research deals with the 19th-20th century social history of south-west Ghana.

**Alessandra BRIVIO, *From domestic slaves to domestic labourers: The Gold Coast case***

**ABSTRACT:** The harsh and exploitative working conditions that many African domestic labourers experience in their everyday life provide important grounds for debate on the similarities and the differences between contemporary dynamics of exploitation and past forms of slavery. Gold Coast domestic slavery was described as a mild or benign form of slavery that contrasted with the American plantation slavery. The very expression “domestic slavery” communicated a more lenient idea of slavery and implied the effectiveness of the language of kinship and alliance in integrating the slave within the family. Evidences show variations in the condition of domestic slaves ranging from their complete assimilation within the master's family to the absolute disenfranchising signified by loosing their lives as victims in funerals and other ritual practices. The paper addresses the changes and the continuities of domestic labour since the legal abolition of slavery in the Gold Coast (1874) and the difficulties and resilience in transforming domestic labourers into wagedworkers.

**PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL PROPONENTE:**

Alessandra Brivio holds a postdoctoral degree in anthropology. She teaches social anthropology at the University of Milano Bicocca

**Craig PHELAN, *Thomas Sankara versus the trade unions: Competing visions of modernisation in Burkina Faso, 1983-87***

**ABSTRACT:** By any measure, Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world, and its political instability since its independence in 1960 has been one among many impediments to economic growth. For most of its history, the country has suffered from a lack of viable crops and resources for the export market, and its semi-authoritarian military and civilian leadership has pursued a neo-colonial path to

economic survival, one based on close relations to, and loans from, France. Yet, Burkina Faso has always been fertile ground for more progressive alternatives, and in the 1980s two socialist variants of took centre-stage in a struggle for control of the country's destiny. On the one hand was the Afro-Marxism of Thomas Sankara, the "Che Guevara of Africa", who took power in a military coup and pursued a revolutionary programme that placed peasants at the vanguard of society. Sankara's pursuit of agricultural self-sufficiency, economic populism, meaningful independence from France, women's rights, and democratic centralism made him a heroic figure throughout the developing world. On the other hand, the radical trade union movement, which had always been a powerful force in the country, pursued a wage-labour centred vision of Marxism, one that privileged the salaried civil servants rather than the peasants. The struggle between the two forces was both ideological and real, leading to mass sackings and imprisonment for radical trade unionists. The key issue in the struggle was Sankara's creation of "revolutionary committees" in all workplaces, a Leninist strategy to transform autonomous trade unionism into a pliant tool of the ruling party apparatus. In the end, trade union opposition to Sankara's revolution was powerful enough to help destabilise the regime and pave the way for Sankara's 1987 assassination and the "rectification" of the revolution in the years that followed. Equally important, the struggle illuminates the tensions between the populist-agrarian and the wage-labour-centred visions of socialism that play such a vital role in many developing world countries.

**PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL PROPONENTE:**

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**II sess. (14.15-16.00): Wagers, migrant workers and the transformation of Southern African socio-economic landscapes**

**Chair:** Ann E. McDOUGALL

**Discussant:** Jan-Bart GEWALD

**Michela MOSSETTO CARINI**, *Paternalism as a mode of action: Mozambican migrant mineworkers' practices of mobilisation and labour organisation*

**ABSTRACT:** Mining compounds have been the site not only of workers' struggles but also of broader social conflict and political resistance in Africa. While the literature on mineworkers' activism has reflected this complexity, it has largely relied on notions of the working class as a homogenous and nationally-defined group and focused on trade unions as the primary paradigm of workers' mobilisation. This has neglected the multiplicity of workers' experiences and the development of forms of resistance and organisation outside the trade union domain. The Association of Mozambican Mineworkers (AMIMO), formally established in 1998 as a membership-based nonprofit organisation, represents an example of such different forms of activism. Developed by Mozambican mineworkers employed in South Africa, AMIMO raises its demands primarily vis-à-vis the Mozambican government, focusing not on wage bargains but on the social security of mineworking families and communities stretching across a national border.

This qualitative study of AMIMO's membership and practices reveals the complex workings of a non-union form of labour organisation, shedding light on the possibilities and challenges of mobilising constituencies that have largely remained marginalised in trade union movements. These groups include 'temporary' migrants as well as retrenched and casualised workers and their families, who are highly dependent on workers' rights and wages and, in the case of the South African mining industry, are acquiring increasing relevance in the current climate of economic decline and retrenchment. Examining AMIMO's attempts to represent and mobilise migrant mine-working communities, the paper revisits E.P. Thompson's theory of the 'moral economy' where paternalism and contestation are not exclusive but mutually constitutive of workers' resistance. It further develops Thompson's claim by proposing the concept of 'activist paternalism', where paternalism itself becomes a mode of action and organisation at intersecting local,

national and international levels. Exceeding conventional notions of workers' collective action and focusing on mine-working communities' rather than shop-floor struggles, the paper invites further studies to both uncover new worker solidarities and question the homogeneity of longer-standing African labour movements.

**PROPOSER'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

Michela Carini is an MPhil candidate in Development Studies at the University of Oxford. She also holds a BA in Politics and Economics from SOAS, University of London. Her current research, for which she conducted fieldwork in Mozambique and South Africa, focuses on Mozambican migrant mineworkers' collective action and organisation.

**Helena PÉREZ NIÑO**, *Farming households and labour relations in global commodity chains: The case of contract farming in Mozambique*

**ABSTRACT:** Recent contributions to the study of global commodity chains (GCCs) have shed light on the forms of organization, exploitation and resistance by workers in different segments of the chains. Other contributions have called for a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of accumulation and competition among different types of capital. However, an important share of African agricultural producers integrated into GCCs are households that are both owners of the means of production and providers of most of the labour power, i.e. households that combine elements of capital and labour. This is the case in particular in contract farming schemes, an expanding form of outsourced agricultural production in sub-Saharan Africa. This paper examines two decades of agricultural boom in the tobacco sector in Mozambique and the different contradictions that production for export introduces into farming households. It is argued that forms of labour mobilization that emerge are powerfully shaped by longer labour histories and local institutions, but rendered functional for the production of high-value agricultural exports. The case study poses implications for old debates about proletarianization as well as for new debates about 'precarianization'.

**PROPOSER'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

Helena Pérez Niño is a Postdoctoral Fellow at PLAAS, the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of Western Cape in South Africa where she conducts research on agrarian political economy in Southern Africa. Her work on contract farming and tobacco agriculture focuses on the production relations within households and between farmers and workers in agrarian frontiers. Prior to joining PLAAS, Helena was a teaching fellow on agrarian development, post-conflict transitions and the political economy of development at SOAS, University of London where she obtained her PhD with a dissertation on postconflict reconstruction and the tobacco boom on the Malawi-Mozambique borderland. She has published on foreign aid, mining, agriculture and transport sectors in Angola and Mozambique.

**Maxim BOLT**, *Exploitative labour regimes and the possibilities of incorporation: South African agriculture in a place of crisis*

**ABSTRACT:** Contemporary flexible capitalism stands for ephemerality and perpetual change. Arrangements are thought so ad-hoc and fleeting that contracts collapse into informality, employment into entrepreneurialism. Acute crisis is seen merely to hasten capitalism along its path. The notoriously chaotic national border between unemployment-ridden South Africa and Zimbabwe, with its political and economic troubles, is certainly a place of crisis. Southward migrants' experience of transience is one of temporal fragmentation and spatial insecurity. On the border, displacement and the search for employment foreground a distinctly spatial dimension. As migrants seek shelter and work, and as they attempt to avoid apprehension, connections to places are tenuous at best. Crisis and transience here mean not only living from day to day, but also looking over one's shoulder, and figuring out where to go next.

Migrants' vulnerability enables stark regimes of exploitation in centres of capitalist production – the border's plantation estates that export vast quantities of fruit. These regimes are upheld by a range of forms of everyday violence. They are reproduced not only between white farmers and black farm workers, but also within workforces whose hierarchies are rooted in residential labour compounds. At the same time, the farms represent centres of gravity – islands of wage-labour in a sea of informal arrangements.

They have become focal points around which diverse residents organise their lives. Being a farm worker, not a transient border jumper, means being incorporated into arrangements of stability, even permanence, however provisional. This paper examines the relationship between such workplaces as regimes that exploit the vulnerability of transient people, and as settings that offer possibilities for settlement and incorporation. After all, for people facing uncertain futures in current regional upheavals and global capitalism, workplaces are lifelaces.

**PROPOSER'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

Maxim Bolt is Reader in Anthropology and African Studies at the University of Birmingham, and Research Associate at WISER, University of the Witwatersrand. His first monograph, *Zimbabwe's Migrants and South Africa's Border Farms: The Roots of Impermanence*, was recently published by Cambridge University Press and Wits University Press.

**III sess. (16.15-18.00): Capitalist transformations and the labour issue in historical, social and economic perspectives**

**Chair:** Max BOLT

**Discussant:** Bill FREUND

**Ann E. McDOUGALL**, *Work, Workers and Wages: Freed-slaves in the colonial economy of French West Africa (Sahara-Sahel) c.1900-1950*

**ABSTRACT:** 'Why and how did wage labour emerge (in 20th century Africa)?' 'What effects did it have on existing social/family arrangements?' In West Africa's Sahara-Sahel, both questions necessitate engaging with slavery and its abolition under French colonial rule. Because in this exclusively Muslim culture, work was done by servile peoples (slaves, freed-slaves, clients, artisans), labour studies quickly focused on slavery and the economic conditions for its abolition. Emerging wage-labourers were thusly 'proof' of the decline of slavery – not necessarily a measure of capitalist development. What, if anything, did transitions in former-master/former-slave relations reflect about colonial capitalism? Can it be assumed that a *freed slave* working seasonally for wages in the commercialized colonial economy was Marx's *free man* selling his (commodified) labour? Or, alternatively, because a contract between a freed slave and a former master specified payment in something other than 'wages' *per se* (e.g. salt) – should we assume that capitalist interests were *not* present?

The question regarding wage labour and 'existing social and family arrangements' is similarly complicated by the intersection of work and slavery. Earlier literature assumed a fundamental transformation of the family as a consequence of its members (mostly male) becoming wage-labourers. But 'slavery' as framed by Islamic law in the Sahara-Sahel allows for the emergence of wage-labour *within* the traditional 'family' system. The crucial group? Former slaves – slaves freed not by colonial laws but by Islam. They became *freed slaves* (*haratine, bella* and/or *iklan* depending on region), who legally retained family relations. The actual autonomy they exercised at any given time and place was variable and often the locus of conflict. Slavery studies understand this variability -- especially over time, and conflict in terms of tensions inherent in the ending of slavery. However, should we also see these tensions as integral to the early 20th-century evolution of wage-labour and colonial capitalism? Was this indeed the *new working class* French administrators claimed was 'in the making'? This paper will explore these questions in the context of the colonial economy that straddled the Sahara-Sahel, looking specifically at grain agriculture, urban manual/domestic labour, and the region's one mineral industry, salt.

**PROPOSER'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

E. Ann McDougall: BA (1975), MA (1976) Toronto; PhD (1980), Birmingham, UK; Postdoctoral Fellowships/Teaching (1980-86) Dalhousie, Duke, York, Toronto. Assistant – Full Professor (1986 --) University of Alberta. Research: Saharan economic and social history -- special interests salt industry, labour, slavery, Islam, identity (Mauritania).

**Filipa RIBEIRO DA SILVA**, *Political changes and shifts in labour relations in Mozambique, 1820s-1920s*

**ABSTRACT:** This paper examines the main changes in the policies of the Portuguese state in relation to Mozambique and its labour force during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, stemming from political changes within the Portuguese empire (i.e. the independence of Brazil in 1821), the European political scene (i.e. the Berlin Conference, 1884-1885), and the Southern African context (i.e. the growing British, French, and German presence). By becoming a principle mobilizer and employer of labour power in the territory, an allocator of labour to neighbouring colonial states, and by granting private companies authority to play identical roles, the Portuguese state brought about important shifts in labour relations in Mozambique.

Slave and tributary labour were replaced by new forms of indentured labour (initially termed *serviçais* and latter *contratados*) and forced labour (*compelidos*), while the period also saw an increase in commodified labour in the form of wage labour (*voluntários*), self-employment among peasant and settler farmers, and migrant labour to neighbouring colonies.

**PROPOSER'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

Filipa Ribeiro da Silva (1974) is currently Senior Researcher at the International Institute of Social History, in Amsterdam. She studied History at the NOVA University of Lisbon (BA Honours, 1996; MA 2001) and Leiden University (PhD, 2009). She has specialised in Social and Economic History, with a focus on Portuguese and Dutch overseas presence and interactions with Atlantic Africa. Filipa's current research interests focus on the history of Population, Labour, Migration and Trade in Sub-Saharan Africa during the pre-colonial and colonial periods.

**Ettore MORELLI**, *Sotho masters, San slaves? Slavery and modes of production on the precolonial South African Highveld, c. 1870*

**ABSTRACT:** Nineteenth-century Southern Africa is generally identified with two major historical developments: the completion of European colonisation and the “mineral revolution” after the discovery of diamonds and gold, which brought industrial capitalism into the region. This paper will build on a specific event to prove how our understanding of precolonial African societies is still lacking complexity, in particular as to the main features of production, reproduction, dominance and exploitation.

In the year 1870 *morena* Molapo, head of the northern district of the kingdom of Lesotho, sent his two senior sons Jonathan and Joel on an expedition against the San of Soai, who had stolen horses from the *morena's* villages. The expedition resulted in the scattering of what is considered by historians as the last independent group of San of the Southern Highveld-Drakensberg region, and was an important step for the expansion of Lesotho over the highlands, after the more fertile lowlands were lost in the wars against the Orange Free State. However, scholars have given little importance to the fact that the Basotho took San women and children as prisoners during the expedition.

The paper will reconstruct the experience of captivity, attempted escapes, forced marriages and death of those prisoners through the interviews collected by historian Victor Ellenberger and anthropologist Patricia Vinnicombe in two different moments of the twentieth century, and through one of the praise-poems, or *lithoko*, of Jonathan, which was first published between 1919 and 1921. Far from being an isolated or accidental instance, the capture of Soai's women and children followed a rationale that was unashamedly expressed by the Basotho in the line of the above mentioned *thoko*: “That the Bushmen stay barren, every single one” Tracing similar cases in the first half of the nineteenth century, this paper will shed light on the existence of enslavement and slavery in the southern Highveld-Drakensberg region and will argue that they constituted an integral part of the tributary and lienage modes of production of the local African societies, contrary to what has been thought by historians and anthropologist for a long time.

**PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL PROPONENTE:**

Born in Milan in 1990, Ettore Morelli graduated in History at the State University of Milan in 2012, and obtained in 2014 the Master in History from the State University of Pisa and the Diploma in History from the Normal School of Advanced Studies - *Scuola Normale Superiore*. Since September 2014 he is a PhD candidate at the School of Oriental and African Studies.

**Stefano BELLUCCI**, *From slave labour to “free” wage labour in colonial Somalia: Issues of a capitalist transformation*

**ABSTRACT:** In a book entitled *Colonialism Today*, published in 1981, Hosea Jaffe claimed that colonialism was the cradle of capitalism. His key point was that although, in chronological terms, the capitalist mode of production preceded the imperialist invasion – economic, political and military – by European countries around the world, it was with colonialism that the capitalist mode of production established itself as a “system”. A system is a set of rules or a regime that governs the actions of human beings. Central to the capitalist mode of production is labour. According to Marx, capitalism exists when an individual sells his/her labour power in exchange for a wage. Wage labour therefore usually serves to indicate the presence of a capitalist mode of production.

Following this reasoning, it is difficult to study colonial economics or colonialism in general without keeping in mind the organisation of labour. Turning to the particular case of Colonial Somalia, the author notes that, in the Nineteenth century, part of the territory that was inhabited by the Somali people was colonised by Italy, a semi-capitalist European nation. Indeed, Italian capitalism has been accurately described by both Lenin and then Gramsci as “imperialismo straccione” (imperialism of the beggars), as Italy, when it started its imperialist adventure, did not have capital to export and conquered African territories in order not to lag behind other neighbouring nations – namely France. Italian colonialism was thus not driven by a real need to expand economically as a capitalist necessity but rather it was the result of a subjective political design to attain imperial standing at the expense of African peoples. However, colonialism gave the growing Italian capitalist class – closely linked to the political class system – a way to enter in connection with their European counterparts.

For the Somali peoples, subjected to Italian colonial domination, the issue was a different one – namely, to what extent did colonialism change Somali societies and their mode of production? Historians largely agree that it is difficult to offer any clear-cut answers to this question. The question is quite crucial and it concerns the issue of the capitalist transformation of a society. In the contemporary world, capitalism is considered the “normal” mode of production. It is often described as dominant or contagious. Some societies though seem to escape its power. Or maybe this is only a superficial view, and in reality all African societies, including the Somali one, are capitalistic in nature, and therefore not different in essence from Western societies. This also means that they should be included in the global capitalist system and, to that extent, colonialism was instrumental in this development. The issue of labour is crucial because, if this is true, we should have in place a system of classes of exploited workers and another class which extracts value from this labour. The social and economic differences (inequalities) are therefore present and inevitably set to increase, bringing more conflictual situations.

**PROPOSER’S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

Stefano Bellucci is senior researcher in the global labour history programme at the International Institute of Social History and a lecturer in African economics and history at Leiden University, Faculty of Humanities, Institute for History, in the Netherlands.