

Monday, 07.09.2026; 4:15 - 5:45 pm CEST

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Child Labour Opponents and their Campaigns in Global Perspective, 1880s-1930s

Abstract:

This lecture will address two points: first, I will introduce key findings from my recent book on child labour opponents and their campaigns at the turn of the 20th century. Second, I will reveal the difficulties I faced while writing that history.

The book explores a hitherto under-examined question: how and why did child labour develop into a key concern worldwide between the 1880s and 1930s? Who were the protagonists who first raised the issue as a global concern? My study provides the first account of the history of diverse and locally grounded – but nationally and frequently globally connected – child labour opponents in the Americas, their motivations and campaigns.

I argue that, for the period between the 1880s and 1930s, one can identify similar protagonists, a broadly similar time frame, common platforms, comparable campaigning mechanisms and many types of connections across regions. Nevertheless, in contrast to the global anti-slavery movement, child labour opponents formed a loosely institutionalised network which lacked an international organisation that focused specifically on child labour. A global history approach to child labour opponents helps reveal large-scale patterns across societies and highlight similarities and differences between cases.

Throughout my research journey I faced a number of difficulties – the subject of the second part of my talk. In particular, I struggled with finding an adequate narrative for a global history that moves beyond a eurocentric and western diffusion model as well as national accounts – the reason why I decided to give my book quite an experimental structure.

Short Bio:

Nina Schneider holds a PhD in History from the University of Essex, UK, and currently serves as the Chair of Latin American History in Global Perspective at the Catholic University Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany, where she also co-directs the Latin American Studies Centre (ZILAS). Previously, she was a Visiting Scholar at Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR, 2012), Marie-Curie Fellow at the Zukunftskolleg Konstanz (2013-2015), Visiting Scholar the National University of Brasília (UNB, 2015), Research Group Leader at the Centre for Global Cooperation Research (2018-2024) at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany, and Jean Monnet Fellow at the EUI in Florence (2024-2025). She is the author of: *Child Labour Opponents in the Americas and their Campaigns in global perspective, 1880-1930s* (De Gruyter, 2025); *Brazilian Propaganda: Legitimizing an Authoritarian Regime* (University Press of Florida, 2014); "Origins of Child Rights Governance: The Example of Early Child Labour Legislation in the United States and Brazil," *Childhood: A Journal of Global Child Research* 26, no. 3 (2019): 289-303; and (with Rebecca J. Atencio); 'Reckoning with Dictatorship in Brazil: The Double-Edged Role of cultural-artistic Production', *Latin American Perspectives* 43, no. 5 (2016): 12-28 (Honorary Mention 2016, LASA Brazil Section).