

Program

1st Meeting of the Working Group Global Economy and Multinational Enterprises (GEME)

Wednesday, 8th October 2025

BASF SE, Visitor Center, Carl-Bosch-Straße 38, 67063 Ludwigshafen

«Foreign Direct Investment and the Globalization of the German Industry in the 1970s»

The world in the 1970s – the years of two oil price shocks, currency turbulence and the emergence of «new protectionism» – placed particular pressure on German business. Having connected with global markets primarily via exports, currency appreciation and trade protection quickly devalued this strategy. Many industries therefore chose to engage in offshoring production and the world saw a rapidly increasing stream of German FDI. On the other hand, German industry became an interesting target for inbound FDI, particularly from OPEC states, looking for secure investment.

The workshop meeting aims at addressing this well-known macroeconomic situation from a Business History perspective. Based on archival research in corporate archives, we want to discuss how corporations reacted to this dynamic global economic environment. What was the driving force and the main motivation for increasing FDI? To what extent did government subsidies influence the decision-making? Did European integration play a significant role? What specific challenges did corporations face in particular foreign markets? How was the FDI financed and which role did the parallel revolution in international banking play? The workshop will convene four empirically grounded talks and provide space for discussion and networking.

- 13:00 **Introduction**
Jan-Otmar Hesse, University of Bayreuth / Society for Business History Germany
- 13:30 **Keynote**
The Role of FDI-Research in Business History
Neil Rollings, University of Glasgow
- 14:45 Market Entry in China: The Case of Sartorius, 1970s–1990s
Caetano Franz, University of Göttingen / Sartorius AG
- 15:45 **Coffee Break**
- 16:15 When Quality Meets Sovereignty: German Footwear/Leather Companies in
India's Postcolonial Market
Christina Häberle, Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam
- 17:15 Elastic Images of Europe. The European Rubber Industry as Agent and Site of
Europeanisation, 1950–1980
Tonio Schwertner, Humboldt University of Berlin
- 18:15 **Discussion** and Further Program of the Working Group
Working Group Chair - Election
- 19:00 Close of Event