



## Research Seminar Series in Economic Sciences, 2025 – 2026

**Speaker:** Kleoniki Alexopoulou, *Postdoctoral Researcher in Economic History and History of Colonialism*



**Title:** "Transformations of Labor from the Colonial to the Postcolonial Era: Africa's Short Twentieth Century"

**Date & Time:** Wednesday, January 21st, 2026, 14:00 - 15:30

**Place:** Grypario Megaro (Sofokleous 1) | 4<sup>th</sup> floor | Lecture Hall "Kosmas Psychopedis" (416)

**Live streaming of the event:** <https://delos.uoa.gr/opendelos/search-live>

**Url:** [https://www.econ.uoa.gr/ereynitika\\_seminaria\\_research\\_seminars/](https://www.econ.uoa.gr/ereynitika_seminaria_research_seminars/)

### **Abstract:**

This talk offers a macro-historical overview of labor transformations in Southern and Central Africa from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, focusing on the transition from colonial to postcolonial regimes. It first examines forms of "free" and unfree, waged and forced labor during the late colonial period, highlighting both similarities and differences across regions under British, Portuguese, and Belgian rule, as well as independent South Africa. Particular attention is paid to labor systems in agricultural production in the Belgian Congo and Portuguese Africa, and to processes of proletarianization in the mining sectors of South Africa and British Northern Rhodesia.<sup>2</sup> The analysis then shifts to the postcolonial period, addressing the growing precariousness of labor associated with rapid urbanization, possible deindustrialization, and the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs during the 1980s and 1990s. The expansion of informal labor is explored both as a survival strategy and as a space of agency through which African workers respond to rising poverty and inequality. Ultimately, the talk argues that major historical ruptures—such as political independence—did not eliminate long-term continuities in labor regimes. Instead, colonial legacies continue to shape contemporary labor markets, social hierarchies, and forms of economic organization across the African continent

**Organizers:** Dimitris Kenourgios, *Professor*

George Dotsis, *Professor*

Frago Kourandi, *Assoc. Professor*

Thank you.

