



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

How to Self-Organise? Insights from Workers at Albert Heijn (Ahold) and Unox (Unilever) in the Netherlands, 1960-2020

Kösters, R.M.

Citation

Kösters, R. M. (2026, March 26). *How to Self-Organise?: Insights from Workers at Albert Heijn (Ahold) and Unox (Unilever) in the Netherlands, 1960-2020*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4285350>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4285350>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Acknowledgements

Although this research project was officially a one-woman endeavour, many people showed their solidarity and support.

From the outset, my supervisors encouraged me to forge my own path. I thank Leo for his enthusiasm and his ability to know when to say 'enough.' Conversations with Matthias often covered topics other than the dissertation and I owe much of who I am as a historian to him.

This research would not have been possible without the help of Emile, Jaap, Jan, Mari-Anne, Patrick, Roy, Toon and the archivists at the BHIC, the CDC, the HICO, the IISH and the NA.

My colleagues at the IISH were a constant source of support, and it is impossible to do them all justice. Hamid, Maarten, Malou, Nelson and Thijs took care of food and organisational matters, and were always up for a chat. Jacqueline was a true anchor. Aad, Astrid and Marie-José provided invaluable practical and emotional support.

Several people in the Collections Department made me consider switching to their part of the building. I thank Almudena, Andrea, Andreas, Eef, Ellen, Eric, Ilma, Julia, Maisan, Monique, Simon and Thijs for making it so much fun to bridge the disciplines. I am also grateful to Frank, Jack and Jacques for helping me to trace some of the sources, and to Eva and Jelle for assisting me with bookbinding.

My colleagues at the Research Department showed solidarity in many ways. It was a real pleasure to lay the foundations for this project with Bob, Loran and Moira. I consider myself lucky to have collaborated with students who kept me sharp and inspired: Amber, Amber, Catherine, Ishiah, Josie, Kelly, Matías, Meike, Sara and Teun. I thank Filipa, Gijs, Pepijn and Ulbe for treating me as a valued colleague. Henk, Lucas and Rombert were always up for conversations about almshouses, *bakfietsen* and trains. Sjaak let me fill his big slippers. Marcel was an 'ally', as he once put it. Talking to Samantha about the struggles of PhD life always helped. Hanna was never too busy to listen to daily joys and concerns. Jens became someone to build with and rely on.

Towards the end, Karin gave me the opportunity to write a grant application for a new project. Working on the proposal with Ilze was highly stimulating. Ultimately, I had to complete this dissertation while starting two new projects. Fortunately, the inspiration and energy of Anniek, Caroline, Elise, Ger, Ilze, Judith, Laura, Laura, Lisa, Pritha, Raisa and Rose, as well as Jens, Rika and Sabine, proved highly motivating.

Working with Cornelia, Eva, Robert and Thijs in the works council gave me invaluable hands-on experience. Similarly, discussions and collaborations with many others in various unions, movements and collectives taught me more about organising and solidarity than research alone could have.

Jan Hein, Maartje and Peter gave me the courage to aim for this PhD project – they took me seriously before I did. Throughout the project Ewout, Lisa, Paul,

Rein and Saskia gave me a second academic home at De Burcht. Wim retired, but he made sure I got off to a flying start. Bram, Jeroen, Robert, Sietske, Tanik and Weixuan were true peers, especially during the pandemic. Bram and Naomi challenged me intellectually.

Maria, Nina and Sibylle became true friend-colleagues. If I ever move to Sweden, it will be partly for the nature and partly for Jenny, Jonas and Silke. If I end up in Leipzig, it will be to be closer to Johanna and her family.

Many friends were always willing to hear about the research, and to eat, walk and laugh with me. I especially thank Bob for our discussions about politics and for keeping me up to date with the '*klussers* Reddit'. Life is never dull when I meet up with Christinanne. Oscar knows when to have (the best) food ready. Dean, Dirk and Toer keep me grounded and never say no to a beer. Jantine and Tinka have been around since long before the dissertation, and I hope to have them close by for many more stages of life to come.

I feel honoured that Nina and Rosa are my two *paranifmen*. If anyone has supported me over the past few years, it has been them: there is no Friday like a Friday with Nina, and there is no better 'other Rosa' than Rosa.

Although Annet and Jos were initially sceptical about my decision to choose for history, they have since become my biggest supporters. Jari and I are very different, but I can always count on him.

After years of research and writing, it was a real treat to collaborate with Benjamin on the layout of this dissertation. I thank him for our struggles with fonts and photographs, for binding a book with me for the first time, and for bringing music, nature and love into my life.

Curriculum Vitae

Rosa Kösters studied History at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) from 2012 to 2019. She obtained her BA and MA *cum laude* and in 2018 received the *Thesis Prize for the Trade Union Movement* for her MA thesis. After graduating, she worked at the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies and the International Institute of Social History (IISH). In 2020, she started her PhD research at the IISH and Leiden University.

While writing her dissertation, Rosa took on several additional roles. In 2020, she became coordinator of the *Hub Global Labour Conflicts* project, which aims to collect and make accessible data on collective actions around the world. She lectured at the UvA from 2021 to 2022 and for the NW Posthumus Institute from 2022 to 2023. In 2022, she co-founded the Working Group on Precarious Labour of the European Labour History Network (ELHN) and became one of its coordinators. In 2024, she was elected Vice Chair of the Steering Committee of the ELHN.

Rosa also began contributing regularly to national media outlets, including newspapers, television, and radio. She has been a guest speaker at trade union meetings, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, and public events. In recognition of her work as a science communicator, she was awarded the KNAW Faces of Science Prize in 2022.

Since completing her dissertation in 2025, Rosa has worked as the Principal Investigator (PI) of the *Women Forward with Network V* project, a collaboration between the IISH and the FNV trade union that promotes gender equality at the shopfloor by creating, supporting and expanding women's networks, and conducting research. She is also a postdoctoral researcher on a citizen science project examining collective labour action in Indonesia between 1850 and 1965.