

## Pierre du Bois Doctoral Workshop 2022

### “Histories of Capitalism in Europe and the World”

The second Annual Pierre du Bois Doctoral Workshop, organised by the International History and Politics Department of the Geneva Graduate Institute in partnership with the Pierre du Bois Foundation, took place at Maison de la Paix on 29th and 30th September 2022. The Workshop was themed **“Histories of Capitalism in Europe and the World”**, and it was organised by PhD candidates Amal Shahid, Fernanda Conforto de Oliveira, Şeun Williams, and Michele Zampa from the International History and Politics department with the generous support of the Pierre du Bois Foundation.

In addition to several other attendees, a total of eighteen scholars participated in the workshop. While a good number of the participants were from the Geneva Graduate Institute, there were also several scholars from various universities across Switzerland and Europe. The organisers also invited four senior scholars from other Swiss and European universities to contribute to the workshop in various capacities.

The workshop consisted of three panels, each including three or four speakers, a chair, and a discussant. There was also a roundtable discussion on the methods and approaches to research in economic history.

The first panel was on **“Colonialism and Economic History”**. Doctoral researchers Felipe Melo, Ernest Sasu Kwame Sewordor, and Amal Shahid presented their papers, which were commented on by invited expert Andreas Eckert from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. The papers critically examined the underpinnings and impacts of capitalist development in different colonial contexts. The historical topics covered ranged from Melo’s examination of the impacts of eighteenth-century European capitalism on the cultivation of Brazilian raw cotton; to Sewordor’s discussion on the place of concessionaire imperialism and racial capitalism in gold-mining in colonial Ghana; as well as Shahid’s exploration of issues relating to famine relief, labour and the poorhouse in colonial India.

The second panel brought together papers exploring the subject of **“Multispecies Capital: Colonising and Commoditizing Nature”**. Tomas Bartoletti, Sabrina Sigel, Anshul Verma and Şeun Williams were the doctoral researchers who presented their papers on the panel, after which Eric Vanhaute from Ghent University was invited to offer comments and feedback. Collectively, the centrality of the entangled relationships between humans and other species particularly within commodity economies is the thread that runs through the papers. Anshul Verma and Seun Williams examined the place of colonial science in the capitalist commodification of milk, and livestock (for meat) in India and Nigeria respectively. The history

of the institutionalisation of economic entomology, and the economic importance of a number of insects in plantation economies in Syria and German Samoa were the focus of Tomas Bartoletti's presentation; while Sabrina Sigel dwelled on a discourse analysis of the themes of deforestation and (un)sustainability in newspaper reports on the capitalist exploitation of Sao Paulo forests in the late nineteenth century.

The third panel was titled "**Financial History**". Doctoral researchers Michele Zampa, Fernanda Conforto de Oliveira and Qiuyang Chen presented their research, which was commented on by invited expert Juan Flores Zendejas from the University of Geneva. The panel discussed the role of a number of financial institutions and practices within a wide range of historical, political and geographical contexts. While all the papers were tied together by the common focus on the development of financial customs within their specific historical contexts, the presenting scholars used a variety of different research methods to approach their topics. Michele Zampa used econometrics and primary source analysis to shed light on the credit allocation mechanism to private and public firms under the Fascist Regime. Fernanda Conforto de Oliveira explored the decision making process of the International Monetary Fund through the 50s and 60s vis a vis the political changes in Argentina and Brazil through quantitative text analysis. Qiuyang Chen focused on the development of informal credit networks of women in Southeast Coastal China by making use of interviews, archival materials, and privately collected reports.

The workshop also included a roundtable discussion on the methods and approaches to research in economic history. The discussants were Professors Rui Esteves, Amalia Ribí Forclaz and Nathan Sussman from the Geneva Graduate Institute, as well as Pilar Nogues-Marco from the University of Geneva, and Andreas Eckert. The roundtable discussion focused on the future of economic history as a discipline, the convergence of social sciences and the integration of different methodologies. A recording of the roundtable can be viewed [here](#).