

Pierre du Bois Doctoral Workshop 2023

“Mobile Actors in Global History”

The third edition of the Annual Pierre du Bois doctoral Workshop gathered scholars from 11 countries at Maison de la Paix, on 3 and 4 April 2023. The workshop, carrying the title of “Mobile Actors in Global History” was organized by Anna Diem and Burak Sayim with the generous support of the Pierre du Bois Foundation.

In total, four senior scholars from four different countries joined the workshop, in addition to 12 PhD candidates and early career scholars, coming from major institutions from Switzerland, the US, the UK, Spain, Italy, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden, Turkey and the UAE. The workshop consisted of four thematic panels with three speakers each, as well as a senior scholar serving as the discussant. Moreover, a roundtable entitled “What and where are the archives of global history” took place on the first day.

Following the introductory remarks, the first panel, “Cross-border Politics,” brought together Burak Sayim (New York University Abu Dhabi), Irène Portas Vazquez (University of Luxembourg) and Luis Martinez (Complutense University, Madrid) for a discussion of cross-border activism in highly diverse geographical contexts. Presentations explored different forms of trans-border political activism in the interwar Middle East, in Luxemburg, and on the Gibraltar-Spain border in the 20th century. The papers were commented on by invited expert Ramazan Hakki Öztan from Bogazici University, Istanbul.

The second panel was organized around the theme of “Global Expert Networks.” Anna Diem (Geneva Graduate Institute) discussed turn-of-the-century networks advocating progress, with a special emphasis on Rudolf Broda and his circles. Joshua Ben Klein (Geneva Graduate Institute) tracked the trajectory of Roger Bastide straddling Brazil and France. Lavinia Gambini (University of Cambridge) took us to Medici Florence and explored what the popularity of non-Western diviners meant. Odile Moreau from University Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 was the discussant of the second panel.

On the second day, the third panel focused on “Biographical Approaches” to global history. The panel opened up with Marilia Arantes Moreira’s (University of London) presentation focusing on Antoine Larcher’s role in spreading the French Revolution into Brazil. Daria Dyakonova (International Institute, Geneva) shed light on the network of communist women in the 1920s. Finally, Shruit Balaji (London School of Economics) explored Rameshwari Nehru’s political thought in the context of women’s civil-society networks, Afro-Asian solidarity movements, and political decolonization. Fredrik Petersson from Stockholm University’s discussion of papers presented was followed by lively exchanges on the topics explored.

The final panel was dedicated to the subject of “Diaspora Politics.” Sara Zanotta (University of Pavia) opened the panel with a paper on the Iranian constitutional network in the Ottoman Empire, the Caucasus, and India. Kelvin Ng (Yale University) investigated the Self-Respect

movement, and anti-caste thought in the interwar years through two Tamil-language papers published in Singapore. Finally, Philipp Horn (University of Bern) dwelled on the entangling histories of Caribbean and African black militants operating under French colonial rule. Aidan Russell from Geneva Graduate Institute offered a synthesis of the discussions held at the panel, as well as further questions for research as the discussant of the panel. Last but not least, Ramazan Hakkı Öztan offered concluding remarks about the new trajectories of global history and the new generation of global historians with their increasing interest in tying micro-level research to macro discussions that traditionally defined global history.

In addition to panels, a roundtable moderated by Burak Sayim brought together Fredrik Petersson, Odile Moreau, Ramazan Hakkı Öztan on the topic of archival difficulties in global history. Speakers took turns in discussing the archival challenges they faced, as well as the particularities of the archives they used, including French, Turkish, and Russian archives. Subjects explored in the roundtable included linguistic difficulties, the rise of online archives, as well as some practical tips for young researchers.

The whole workshop happened in an exceptionally friendly and engaged atmosphere created by all participants. The vivid discussions continued beyond the panels throughout the delicious dinner and over beers in the timid April sun after the last session. We hope there will be opportunities to continue the exchange and connection, and to develop the ideas that took shape in our conversations further.