



CALL FOR PAPERS

Workshop Mobile Actors in Global History

Graduate Institute, Geneva, Switzerland
April 3 and 4, 2023

The third annual Pierre du Bois workshop aims to bring together historians studying mobile actors and their networks to discuss theoretical and methodological challenges in our work. Studying mobile actors has given scholars a new understanding of connectivities across national and regional borders and tools to challenge commonly accepted demarcation lines and, all in all, explore new and exciting horizons in our craft.

But research questions focusing on mobile actors and their networks have also brought about a fresh set of methodological challenges. Following the paper trail left by mobile actors, and particularly non-elite actors, is anything but straightforward, as the historical records of people whose activity spanned across diverse national spaces often do not fit neatly into national and nationally divided archival sources. Ironically, this sometimes fits the intention of the historical actors who used mobility as a method to escape the state. Put differently, historians often find themselves facing the uphill task of tracing transnational stories through national or nationally-oriented archival sources. How can we square that circle?

While engagement with itinerant actors is not new in historical scholarship, several developments have been spurring interest in them: attempts to decentralise the nation state, a shift of focus away from 'important men' to non-elite actors, and 'global history' following the 'spatial turn' have all underpinned this trend. In themes ranging from political organising to the circulation of ideas or commodities, trading networks, migratory flows, diaspora communities, exile, or cultural exchange, mobile actors and cross-border practices have come to the forefront of historical research.

Another dimension of mobility often, if not always, connected to geographical movement is mobility through different social, political, or cultural milieus and institutions. On one hand universities, conferences, or periodicals may act as nodes which connect different actors. On the other hand, intermediaries or 'brokers' may move through, and hence connect, different milieus and institutions. Tracing single actors' various involvements and heterodox engagements adds an additional layer of methodological challenges. Our workshop wants to create a platform to discuss these and related questions.

Topics may include but are not limited to:

- political, activist, scholarly, cultural networks
- the circulation of people and (their) ideas
- exile and diaspora communities
- cross-border practices
- the connection between geographical and social / political mobility
- mobility through different social, political, or cultural milieus and institutions
- how do 'brokers' move through and connect different milieus and institutions
- sedentary actors and global networks

Application process:

Please submit a 250-word abstract along with a short statement of interest and a 1-page CV to mobileactors2023@gmail.com by February 5, 2023.

We particularly welcome PhDs and Early Career Scholars.

There is limited financial support available for PhDs travelling from outside Switzerland.

Convenors:

Anna Diem, MA, Graduate Institute, Geneva

Burak Sayım, PhD, NYU Abu Dhabi



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