Rendez-vous d’histoire coloniale, 2nd edition

Call for papers: « (Anti)colonialism and (inter)nationalism »


Recent colonial and imperial historiography motivate scholars to rethink the relations between the ‘metropoles’ and the ‘colonies’. Beyond the centre/periphery paradigm, often dismissed as Eurocentric, many studies have been looking at imperial systems as ‘interactive units’ deployed in ‘imperial webs’. If international movements are forces able to structure imperial spaces and regimes, this requires taking into account a variety of circulations, imperial, inter-imperial, trans-imperial as well as international, so as to test the boundaries, the connections and the hierarchies of empires. This stance goes against the notion of colonial ‘contact’ which pushes into the background the questions of imperial domination understood as the ascendency of a minority on racially and socially inferiorized majorities, following a process of differentiation of the colonised that would justify their partial integration into a heterogeneous imperial political entity.

In the wake of Colonial studies, this conference invites scholars to put to use the tools of both critical social sciences - for a strong empirical and contextual anchorage - and those of Postcolonial studies, in order to bring (back) to light the multiple dimensions of imperial domination.

So as not to fall into the trap of an imperial history that isolates empires as self-sufficient units, it will also pay specific attention to extra- and trans-imperial circulation. While colonisers and colonised interact, they are not isolated from the rest of the world. Indeed, imperial relations take place within

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8 Julian Go, Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016.
frameworks of international relations that transcend borders and other geographical and political boundaries, whether regional, national or colonial. Competitions between imperialisms have already been extensively studied in this sense, as have the ways in which the colonised - and even colonisers - can seize upon them to assert their interests. Empires are also legal elaborations that place the notion of "international" and "international relations" in tension, and are themselves akin to forms of transnational construction, since certain states are allowed to retain parcels of sovereignty within them.

In line with these historiographical approaches, the aim of the conference is to explore the question of colonisation through a prism that is as global as it is localised, attentive to the overall system and its concrete expressions, without geographical restriction, for the modern and contemporary periods. It thus intends to explore the issues of domination, right down to the flesh of the actors, from a global perspective that is sensitive to interactions and contestations.

Several topics seem particularly relevant, though papers do not need to fit into those categories:

**Theme 1 – Rethinking the Empire of Knowledge through the prism of internationalism(s).**

This theme invites us to examine the relationship between the development of so-called colonial and imperial sciences, and the international dynamics which, in the contemporary era, have an impact on the organisation of science. The subject of the “scientific international”, i.e. the way in which international space is gradually becoming a legitimate space for the production of knowledge, has been studied through the prism of both international relations and transnational history.

Focused on Europe at the turn of the twentieth century, however, this history has not sufficiently focused on the empire, even though European powers were fully involved in colonial dynamics at that time. Furthermore, since the early 2000s, colonial sciences have been a fertile field of research in

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colonial history. These studies have focused on the way in which the development of geographical, historical, archaeological, legal or medical knowledge made it possible to objectify empires, but most of these works have not looked in depth at the question of international and trans-imperial circulation. Yet Postcolonial and Decolonial studies have shown the extent to which colonisations have imposed a division of intellectual labour and dominant knowledge on a global scale over the long term. Moreover, examining the way in which the internationalisation of science affects the production and dissemination of colonial knowledge should enable us to renew our perspectives in regards of the metropolis/colony confrontation and of the critique of Georges Basalla’s diffusionist model. Historians of science have emphasised the multipolar nature of the British Empire, organised around a number of intellectual and scientific centres. Notions of multipolarity and internationalism have thus been enriching recent work on scientific institutions set up by the colonial powers in their colonies, as well as the research on scientific capitals in the colonial context.

Following these studies, we invite proposals that highlight the interactions between the production of knowledge by colonisers and pre-existing indigenous knowledge. What happens to knowledge once it has been “colonised”? What were the exchanges of knowledge between empires, and did they have mutually reinforcing or rivalrous effects?

**Theme 2 – Anti-imperialism et internationalism.**

To adopt a focus on transnational circulations and their links with political movements opposing (post)colonialism, allows us to further understand the driving forces behind imperial domination. The inter-war period provided fertile ground for historiographical progress in this realm. The emergence of anti-imperialist international communist and pan-Africanist experiences led colonised...
people to travel the world to fight against the order that oppressed them\(^24\). In the aftermath of the First World War, men and women activists settled in colonial metropoles, making them the rear base for political movements in the colonies, as they did in Russia, the United States and other empires, different from the ones in which they were imperial subjects. Did these mobilities contribute to defining imperial space while challenging imperial domination? Did activists reappropriate the imperial space, or was this only a prerogative of the colonisers? To what extent did their proclaimed internationalism really lead to the establishment of connections between international communist organisms or groups and the colonies? How did men and women activists from colonising and colonised countries build political solidarity\(^25\)? Conversely, by provoking a reinforcement of control and surveillance, did these militant movements enable renegotiations of imperial mobilities?

Today, these past struggles can inform movements that have international elements to them: from the removal of statues to the question of colonial reparations, new militant mobilities (of actors and practices) are evident\(^26\). In the light of these current events, contributions can also tackle epistemic reflections to understand what colonial empires have been and their echoes in today’s world.

**Theme 3 – War and peace: international institutions and colonialism**

The question of the attitude of international institutions to colonisation is a privileged entry point for a relational history of the imperial factor. These institutions - whether diplomatic conferences or summits, or actual international intergovernmental organisations - were often created to resolve military conflicts. In colonial parlance, however, the notion of pacification superseded that of war or peace, legitimising a permanent state of violence, including militarization\(^27\). Indeed, while the idea of a "centenary of the conquest of Algeria" imposed the representation of a uniform and rapid conquest, this proved to be a long and bumpy process. Similarly, the "indigénat" instituted forms of violence in civil administration that drew on the conquest and the military administration of the colonies\(^28\). Respect for human rights thus became a key issue in international interventions on the


colonial question, mobilising experts and expertise. As a result, international institutions were taking decisions on many aspects of the colonial situation, from geopolitical questions concerning borders and resources, to social issues such as the environment, food, labour, health and education.

The contributions can thus address several questions: can international institutions really compete with imperial institutions, or are they merely new ruses of imperial reason? Can colonised women and men get a hold of, and a say in, those spaces, or are they doomed to fail? Can relations between colonisers and the colonised be restructured within these spaces?

Theme 4 – Nationalisation of societies and the colonial situation:

Colonialism was the context for the affirmation of national mobilizations among the colonised. In contrast to the imposition of sovereignty by the colonial metropoles, resistance was framed on international bases: Pan-Africanism or Pan-Asianism, in reference to Africanity or Asianity, Pan-Islamism in reference to the Ummah, Negritude through racial self-identification, were all communities imagined to counter imperialism. The rise of colonised nationalisms also responded to this logic. As for the colonisers themselves, their expression of nationalism followed different logics, depending on their social and political positions. The francité claimed by Louisiana colonialists in the second half of the 18th century had nothing to do with the "greater France" claimed by the Minister of Colonies at the 1931 Colonial Exhibition. Other situations, such as the

35 Naïma Maggetti, « La Grande-Bretagne à l’ONU dans les années 1940 et 1950 : sa défense d’un colonialisme “libéral et éclairé” », Relations internationales, n° 177, 2019, p. 31-44.
Algerian identity of pieds-noirs or the American identity of colonisers, lead to identification not with the imperial nation but with the colonised land. Naturalizations and denaturalizations were tools for legitimising and maintaining the colonial order, but also paradoxical levers for partially overcoming domination through access to citizenship. In this latter area, contributions will examine the conditions under which these colonial feelings of belonging emerged, for instance, by analysing the media that produced and circulated them. Contributions could also address how independences changed the perceptions of belonging?

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To submit your proposals, send your abstract to grocolloque@gmail.com before the 1st of February 2024. Abstracts should be of a maximum of 300 words, and they need to include a brief bio. The organisers of the event will not cover travel and accommodation expenses. The event will take place in person, no virtual participation is foreseen.

Scientific and organising committee:

Élise Abassade ; Étienne Arnould ; Nadia Biskri ; Vincent Bollenot ; Marie Challet ; Fabienne Chamelot ; Nora Eguienta ; Edith Ekodo ; Luca Nelson-Gabin ; Margot Garcin ; Quentin Gasteuil ; Thaïs Gendry ; Thierry Guillopé ; Mickael Langlois ; Éric Lechevallier ; Hugo Mulonnière ; Anna Nasser ; Adrien Nery ; Martino Oppizzi ; Maëlle Pennéguès ; Antonin Plarier ; Christelle Rabier ; Chloé Rosner ; Margo Stemmelin.

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