

## **Transfers of socialism between France and Great Britain, and its popular reception, in the long nineteenth century**

**University of Tours, France, 8-9 February 2024**

This one-day conference seeks to encourage exchanges on the diffusion of socialism between France and the United Kingdom during the long nineteenth century. Not only will the project attempt to establish bridges between historians, political scientists, and philosophers who have worked on this subject; but it will also cross-reference French and British sources, insofar as French socialism integrated elements from Great Britain, and vice versa.

It seems to us that our knowledge of the history of socialism in Europe can be supplemented by interdisciplinary work on the circulation of socialist projects between France and the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century, and especially on the reception of these ideas by the people in the two countries.

The first aim of this project is to provide an opportunity to take a cross-disciplinary look at different projects, such as Morelly's utopian socialism, Fourierism, Saint Simonism, and Owenism. The natural relationship between the individual and the community lies at the heart of the collectivist social models proposed by Etienne Gabriel Morelly (Ducange, 629) and Jean Meslier in the 18th century, and the more cooperative models inspired by Robert Owen in the early 19th century.

The violence of unequal social relations that Meslier denounces stems from the inequality resulting from private property, not the other way round. In setting out the advantages of the common sharing of wealth and the communist organisation of society, Meslier also defends the idea that shortages of goods stem, not from nature, but from private appropriation of these same goods. Owen, on the other hand, was an industrialist renowned for his humanist business policy and his desire to provide his workforce, notably where the children he employed were concerned, with better living and working conditions than the average at the time, regarding education particularly (Simeon, 160). New Lanark was the site of a genuine scientific experiment, an educational project that gradually led to the formation of one of the first socialist theories in history: Owenism, which states that man is the product of the social environment in which he lives.

The impossibility for the individual to escape the movement of history, in particular the technical transformations that allow the increase of wealth through work, had already been underlined by St Simon at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He advocated a solid social organisation in the interests of the community, an "industrialism" that aimed to increase existing wealth and provide work and public education for all workers (Ducange, 622). Later, the

difficult penetration of Marxism in France was partly achieved through the intermediary of militants who had direct contact with Marx in London (Droz, 143).

This conference also aims to explore the relationship between the people and these different projects, in an attempt to determine the extent to which the individual's political practices were influenced by the environment, the class consciousness of the community, traditions, and the propaganda for these socialist proposals. This interdisciplinary project on the political practices of the people will explore the relationship between the aims and activities of political theorists and organisations (as seen in their speeches, resolutions, petitions, and newspapers) and the beliefs and aspirations of local communities, through their own political and cultural practices, including their writings, poems and personal narratives (Joyce, 256).

The conference will thus enable fruitful exchanges between philosophers, political scientists and historians.

\* **Conference venue:** Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Val de Loire, 33 All. Ferdinand de Lesseps, 37200 Tours

\***Dates : 8-9 February 2024**

\***Conference organisers:** Tri TRAN and Juliette GRANGE, laboratoire Interactions Culturelles & Discursives (EA 6297), Université de Tours

\***Scientific committee:** William FINDLAY, Ludovic FROBERT, Juliette GRANGE, Tri TRAN

\***Submission guidelines:**

Each proposal (for a 20-minute presentation), written in English or French (between 300 and 500 words) accompanied by a short biographical note, should be sent to the conference organiser: [tri.tran@univ-tours.fr](mailto:tri.tran@univ-tours.fr)  
The deadline for submission is **1 October 2023** and confirmation of participation will be sent before 1 November 2023.

## Select bibliography

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