

Mobility in the history of Africa. New approaches to the »mobility turn«

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Place: Paris

Organizer: DHIP and

Organizing committee: Dr. Susann Baller, Dr. Robert Heinze (both DHIP), Dr. Didier Nativel (CESSMA),

Mobility is one of the fundamental functions in every society. This realization has occupied the social sciences and humanities, including history, for a number of years. A »mobility turn« was proclaimed as early as 2013. The approach encompasses different forms of mobility and allows to examine many social processes that are otherwise studied separately in their interdependencies – from migration to technical infrastructure and urban development to the transportation of resources, goods and people. At the same time, the global COVID pandemic has drawn new attention to the limits of mobility. Against this backdrop, it is worth taking a fresh look at the concept in the historiography of Africa.

The Summer University of the German Historical Institute Paris (DHIP) and the Centre d'études en sciences sociales sur les mondes africains, américains et asiatiques (CESSMA) brings together researchers from Germany, France, other European countries and Africa to discuss the opportunities and challenges of the »mobility turn« in the history of Africa and the African diaspora. We will examine various forms of mobility across epochs and consider their spatial, political, social, cultural and ecological consequences. We will work out connections between social, cultural, technological and environmental history and question the spatial order of Africa and its constant change through African mobilities from a historical perspective. Submissions from other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities – provided they have a historical dimension – are explicitly encouraged.

The summer university comprises four main topics and corresponding sets of questions:

1. Spaces and mobility: What forms of mobility can be identified historically in Africa? How do they (re)structure the continent's spatial orders in the world? Which spaces result from a history of African mobility? Where do the routes of African mobility begin and where do they end (e.g. in a »Black Atlantic«)? How do (»natural« and built) spaces shape mobilities and how do mobilities change them?
2. Practices and infrastructures: Which are the actors in the history of mobility in Africa and how do they establish forms of mobility in confrontation with their environment and each other? What are the inherent logics of infrastructures of mobility and their control, such as borders, traffic infrastructures, transportation technologies, and how do these change in their use by the actors, or in conflict with them? Are there specifically African cultures of mobility? How have these developed historically? How do they interact with other mobility cultures in an increasingly globalized world?
3. Social configurations and negotiation processes: How do intersectional inequalities and discrimination (class, race, gender) affect mobilities? Which actors and groups of actors can be

identified and what agency do they have? Can continuities of African mobility be identified across epochs? What conflicts over the control of mobility arose before, during and after colonization?

4. Methods and conceptual suggestions for the history of Africa: How does an approach based on mobility relate conceptually to various historiographical approaches from cultural to social to technological history? How can it combine these in a meaningful way to form new questions?

A total of 14 doctoral students and postdocs (up to a maximum of 2 years after completing their dissertation) will take part in the summer university. The organizers aim to cover a proportion of the travel costs. The prerequisite for this is the approval of third-party funding. The event languages are French and English. In exceptional cases, papers may be submitted in advance in German, but must then be presented in one of the other two languages.

Interested applicants should send an abstract (500 words), a short biography (200 words) and detailed contact information (email, phone number, ORCID or website if available) in a PDF document to sommeruni@dhi-paris.fr by January 7, 2024. Selected candidates will be invited to prepare a written contribution of max. 10 pages (approx. 20.000 characters incl. spaces) by April 22, 2024, which will be made available to all participants.

Application deadline: January 7, 2024

Applications and inquiries to: sommeruni@dhi-paris.fr