

Scales of Economy

Veranstalter: Laureate Research Program in International History, University of Sydney

Datum, Ort: 28.07.2016–29.07.2016, Sydney

Bericht von: Quinn Slobodian, Department of History, Wellesley College

Organized by Glenda Sluga (Sydney) and Jamie Martin (Sydney) within the framework of the multi-year Laureate Research Program on „Inventing the International,“ this workshop brought together a group of mostly junior scholars who apply the methodology of intellectual, political, and cultural history to the topics of the economy and economics often neglected by mainstream historiography in the decades since the cultural turn.

The tone of the workshop was set in a public lecture delivered by VANESSA OGLE (Philadelphia) which used archival insights to explain the rise of tax havens as a development strategy in the era of decolonization and what she follows Pierre Veltz and others in calling the global „archipelago economy.“ Ogle profiled some of the main players of the „avoidance industry,“ adepts at establishing and promoting „offshore“ bastions for mobile capital both scattered across the global periphery and in the heart of the world’s most economically powerful nations.

The conference panels began by exploring the nascence of global economic imaginaries in moments of geopolitical crisis. QUINN SLOBODIAN (Wellesley) explained how the field of International Economic Law emerged in the 1970s as a direct response to the mobilization of the Global South for a New International Economic Order (NIEO), scoring a (pyrrhic) victory in the establishment of the World Trade Organization in 1995, which substituted a utopia of rules-based formal equality for one of substantive equality and redistributive social justice. JAMIE MARTIN (Sydney) explored the beginnings of world economic statistics gathering at the League of Nations, when attempts to understand the business cycle as a world phenomenon after the catastrophe of the Great Depression were hindered by the enormous practical difficulty of compiling global data and the fear of disrupting reigning financial orthodoxies.

DAVID EKBLADH (Medford) also found increased attention to the world scale in the 1930s, showing how the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and other U.S. groups sought to inculcate a global consciousness in average American citizens as workers and consumers and convince them of their dependence on a larger world economy.

The second panel shifted its attention from Geneva and Washington to Delhi, Khartoum, and Hong Kong. DAVID ENGERMAN (Waltham) argued against the misrecognition of the Nehruvian period in postcolonial India as one of economic isolationism by demonstrating the many ways that Indian planners – and Indian plans – were part of transnational networks of knowledge production within a self-consciously global frame. ALDEN YOUNG (Philadelphia) showed similarly how the statistical construction of a Sudanese national economy after independence was a bid for inclusion rather than a gesture of secession from the world economy. Rather than the pejorative term of „extroversion,“ he proposed that this outward orientation – and the engagement with the internationally shared internal problems of national income accounting and technocratic governance – reflected the often suppressed „cosmopolitan nature“ of Sudanese economic discussions. NICHOLAS MULDER (New York) also explored the politics of economic measures by proposing an expanded definition of the often-used term of „the economic weapon.“ Alongside the use of sanctions and blockades in the First World War, he asked if the contemporaneous Guangzhou-Hong Kong General Strike could be thought of as an „economic weapon from below.“ The papers of the first day all showed how settlements of scalar boundaries for economic categories (world, nation, continent) were both responses to practical exigencies and self-conscious acts of emplotment for historical actors.

The second day of the conference began with a paper by JOSH SPECHT (Melbourne) approaching the question of scale in the context of national cattle markets in 19th century U.S. Specht observed the disconnect between the strategies of sellers and buyers with the former suffering the constraints of geography much more acutely than the buy-

ers who operated nationally. MADELEINE DUNGY (Cambridge) looked at the problem of gathering and compiling vast amounts of data at the Kiel Institute for the World Economy during the First World War when a nationalist project of securing German military victory necessitated a global perspective on economic affairs. While Alden Young called for a recognition of the cosmopolitan nature of Sudanese economics on the conference's first day, MIRCEA RAIANU (Cambridge) proposed thinking about the „vernacular“ nature of Indian capitalism through a focus on intellectual Benoy Kumar Sarkar's proposal of „Tataism“ as a parallel category to Fordism, combining indigenous categories with the universalism of economic discourse.

One of the features of Tataism was its self-professed attention to ethical concerns putatively absent from modern capitalism. The conference's last panel offered three perspectives on proposals to mollify the effects of the market at three different scales. ANNE REES (Sydney) profiled Persia Campbell, a pioneering economist and consumer advocate who pushed strongly from the 1940s onward for the use of living standards rather than merely GDP growth as the benchmark for development in international organizations. TEHILA SASSON (London/Atlanta) introduced the attempts of transnational corporations from the 1970s onward to counter the NIEO by pursuing humanitarian outcomes through public-private partnerships in the Global South. Sasson proposed that the rise of so-called „philanthrocapitalism“ offered a new public role for private corporations and an enhanced capacity to work around international organizations and representative institutions. In the conference's final paper, MIGUEL BANDEIRA JERÓNIMO (Coimbra) offered a comparative overview of the ways that European empires in the late period of colonialism instituted paired programs of „developmentalization“ and „securitization,“ serving interests of both economic profit maximization and social-military control. The colonial economy became the site of both typical and exaggerated trends in economic management occurring worldwide.

Taken as a whole, the papers of the conference would caution against a too-easy pe-

riodization of the twentieth century as a period of passage from an era of empires to nation-states to globalization. They showed that economic knowledge and forms of economic administration toggled between these scales across the century. The message of the conference was that historians must remain aware of such multilevel dynamics in their period of study through both diligent attention to the categories of their actors and creative application of categories of analysis.

Conference Overview

Session I: Economic Internationalism

Chair: Glenda Sluga (University of Sydney)

Quinn Slobodian (Wellesley College): Ordoglobalism: The Invention of International Economic Law'

Jamie Martin (Harvard University/University of Sydney): When Did the Business Cycle Become a Global Problem?

David Ekbladh (Tufts University): Making the National, Global: US Internationalists and the American Public Look at the Depression World

Session II: Economic Spaces after Empire

Chair: Dirk Moses (University of Sydney)

David Engerman (Brandeis University): Scaling Up the Indian Economy: Superpower Aid and Nehruvian Industrialization

Alden Young (Drexel University): Sudan: The Nation-State Alone Cannot Transform its Destiny

Nicholas Mulder (Columbia University): Contesting the Economic Weapon: Sanctions and the World Economy, 1919-1926'

Session III: From the Local to the National to the Global

Chair: Shane White (University of Sydney)

Josh Specht (Monash University): „Don't You Find You are Not in the Deal?": Scale and the National Market for Cattle in the United States, 1870-1900

Madeleine Dungy (Harvard University): Monitoring the World Economy at War: German Visions of National Solidarity and International Society, 1914-1918

Mircea Raianu (Harvard University): Debating Vernacular Capital: An Intellectual History of Corporate Power in Interwar India

Session IV: Politics and the World Economy

Chair: Vanessa Ogle (University of Pennsylvania)

Anne Rees (University of Sydney): The „Consumer-Minded“ Internationalist: Persia Campbell, Standards of Living, and International Development

Tehila Sasson (Institute of Historical Research London/Emory University): „Philanthrocapitalism“ and the Corporate Project of Feeding the World’s Hungry

Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo (University of Coimbra): Administering Worlds of Inequality: Welfare Colonialism in a Comparative Perspective (1945-1975)

Tagungsbericht *Scales of Economy*. 28.07.2016–29.07.2016, Sydney, in: H-Soz-Kult 09.01.2017.