



**International workshop
Konstanz, June 22-24, 2021**

Imperial Youths in the 19th and 20th Centuries Politics of Difference, Colonialism, and Gender

Organizer

Andreas Guidi, University of Konstanz

Keynote lecture on modern empires

Jane Burbank, New York University

Around today's world, political activism is reclaimed by youth. The juvenilization of politics and the politicization of youth seem to overarch different demands, modes of action, but also the boundaries of national politics. Whereas the urgency to deal with the transnationality of youth cultures and movements has been recognized by recent studies, most historiographic approaches still read youth through the lens of the nation-state, including in the form of international institutions or elaboration of travelling references in a specific national context.

This workshop calls for an alternative approach by combining the history of youth with the expanding history of connected empires. Studying representations, trajectories, and practices of youth can unearth largely unexplored aspects of how empires functioned and changed, while conceptualizing imperial relationships between state and society can open a new perspective on youth history by decentering the nation-state.

The workshop investigates the effervescent period of the 19th and 20th centuries, marked by imperial expansion and contraction, arguing for a double shift in the historiography of youth. Firstly, it elaborates a *pre*-history of national narratives of youth by inquiring into the generative force of imperial politics in producing youth cultures. Secondly, it reconsiders politics mostly discussed as “national” despite their imperial and colonial dimension, highlighting how this dimension marked gender, class, and race boundaries. Whereas forms of anti-imperialism drew massively from representations of youth, this notion also informed patriotism, fascism, or religious sectarianism, often contributing to empires' longevity. Youth as a vital force to domesticate related to imperial concepts of territorial expansion and colonial domination. In turn, these ideas echoed in the colonies leading to challenges for the local population and colonial authorities.

Focusing on youth can bring us to consider unexpected connections but also differences and asymmetries among imperial politics, in line with a “new imperial history” which challenges the divide between colonial maritime and terrestrial empires. The workshop approaches Empire as a category of analysis along three main components: politics of difference, colonial ambitions, representations of gender. It will shed light on how youth was a notion used to replicate or contrast ethnic, religious, or racial hierarchies within empires, how an expansionist or “great power” drive was propagated through youth, and how empires reconfigured notions of gender boundaries.

We invite scholars working on imperial, global, or youth history to submit contributions around three main themes and in line, among others, with the following questions:

1. Politics of difference:

- How does youth interplay with hierarchization based on race, ethnicity, and confession?
- How did clubs and associations, but also art and media cultivate a notion of difference among imperial subjects by referring to youth?
- What were the forces regarding youth as a centrifugal element that threatened imperial coexistence and governance?
- How was youth mobilized to preserve and restore social cohesion in modern empires?

2. Colonialism

- To what extent were representations of youth used to justify colonial expansion?
- How can we connect the impact of imperialist and colonialist cultures on youth in the metropolis and in the colonies?
- How did anticolonial movements elaborate visions of youth by reflecting imperial spaces?
- How can we read imperialism and youth from a post-colonial perspective?

3. Gender

- How did imperial modes of socialization contribute to blurry or reinforce boundaries between genders in youth socialization?
- What civilizational discourses emerged within empires around youth masculinities, femininities, and queerness?
- How did imperialist mindsets produce gendered images of the colonized young?

While the workshop considers empires at a global scale, we particularly encourage proposals covering Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean submitted by early career researchers approaching the end of their Ph.D. or post-docs.

The workshop is planned to take place in Konstanz. If unforeseen developments related to the COVID-19 pandemic hamper our efforts, we will reach out to the selected participants as soon as possible to discuss an alternative format.

The [Centre for Cultural Inquiry \(ZKF\)](#) at the University of Konstanz supports the workshop by covering accommodation (2 nights) and a limited reimbursement for travel expenses.

Please send us a **250-words abstract** (including your topic, relevance for one of the main themes, conceptual approach, and sources) and a **short-bio** (including current stage of research) to:

andreas.guidi@uni-konstanz.de

The deadline for submitting the proposal is **[December 20, 2020](#)**. Selected participants will be notified by the end of January 2021.