

Conference Call for Papers

Mapping multilingual (counter-)expertises: Scientific and political knowledge production across borders in the long twentieth century

School of History, University of St Andrews, 23rd and 24th August 2023

Organisers: Dr Guilherme Fians and Dr Bernhard Struck (University of St Andrews)

To call themselves ‘international’, present-day academic conferences must be held in English. Even though English as transnational academia’s working language is usually taken for granted – particularly in British universities – conference language policies have not always been so. Modern History scholarship has shown that language diversity and language skills are major criteria for demarcating how far one can go from home (Gallagher 2019), how the commodification of certain languages made its native speakers particularly mobile (Phillipson 1992), and for shaping the transnational networks one can join (von Oertzen 2015). Why would this be otherwise when it comes to the production and dissemination of knowledge?

Scholars have explored how translation ensures the prominence of particular forms of knowledge in particular spaces (Gordin 2015) and how multilingualism plays out in academia since at least the nineteenth century (Surman 2018). Yet, there is a lack of systematic approaches analysing the role of code-switching, language varieties, ‘accents’, and multilingualism in knowledge production across periods and spaces in which ‘standard’ English does not squarely play the role of lingua franca. How, for instance, did the use of German for philosophical debates help configure the reach of Western philosophy in the early 1900s? How did Esperanto become a working language for medical congresses in the 1920s? How were French and Portuguese used to produce and spread misinformation regarding pandemic management policies in the 2020s? How do multilingualism and the use of certain languages and media facilitate and/or hinder cross-border communication and knowledge production during the twentieth century? These are some of the questions this two-day conference will ask.

To gather multiple answers to these questions, our conference will frame ‘knowledge’ beyond the narrow, commonplace scope that equates ‘knowledge’ with modern science and expertise. After all, why would traditional, indigenous, political, and lay forms of knowledge be excluded from this conversation? Taking these on board also means being open to counter-expertise, contested forms of knowledge, and sources of ever-polemic misinformation, as well as contexts in which expertise is not recognised as knowledge.

We aim to gather historians, social anthropologists, STS scholars, linguists, and translation studies scholars, among others, to debate issues revolving around, but not limited to:

- How particular languages, language varieties, linguistic ideologies, and media shape the way knowledge has been defined, produced, questioned, and disseminated;



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- Multilingualism in cross-border political and scientific collaboration;
- Language policies and bureaucracy in multilingual settings (e.g. institutions and administration in multilingual countries and/or colonial and imperial contexts);
- Language and information management in large-scale events (e.g. wars, Universal Exhibitions, Olympic Games, international congresses and organisations);
- Knowledge production and exchange in pidgins, creoles, and international auxiliary languages;
- Translanguaging, code-switching, and translation in written and spoken expert communication.

We welcome participants to submit paper proposals for this in-person interdisciplinary conference taking place at the School of History, University of St Andrews, 23-24 August 2023. The working language of the conference will be primarily English, but we are open to proposals in other languages. Catered meals will be provided and speakers will receive funding to help cover accommodation costs.

To propose a paper, please send a 250-word abstract and a 50-word bio to Guilherme Fians (gmf7@st-andrews.ac.uk) and Bernhard Struck (bs50@st-andrews.ac.uk) by January 15th. Applicants will be notified if their paper has been accepted by January 30th.