

WORKSHOP REPORT
'MOBILITY WITHIN AND TO THE GLOBAL SOUTH', COLOGNE, DECEMBER 5-7, 2013

Organizers: Michaela Pelican and Heike Drotbohm
University of Cologne and University of Freiburg

The workshop 'Mobility within and to the Global South' brought together scholars from different disciplines and with various regional specializations to discuss recent trends in international migration, namely, its reorientation towards new geographical destinations, as well as theoretical and methodological implications going along with these shifts. The workshop included senior and younger scholars working on a wide variety of migration, connecting Latin America, the Caribbean, the US, Europe, Africa and Asia. It reflected diverse epistemological and methodological approaches, with participants coming from various world areas and disciplinary backgrounds.

The workshop's main goal was to foster exchange and discussion on conceptual issues related to studying 'Mobility within and to the Global South'. To this aim, we adopted a participatory and interdisciplinary workshop format. We decided to give priority to discussions and to forgo individual presentations by asking participants to prepare profile cards (a snapshot of participants' main working areas, key steps in their academic career, and their most important publications) as well as personal statements in relation to the subject of the workshop. On the basis of these documents, we developed three themes that were tackled in the form of group discussions and subsequent presentations in the plenum: a) migration and citizenship regimes, b) migrant sociability and network, and c) methodologies, epistemologies and collaboration. For each theme 2-3 questions were formulated, so as to guide the discussions. This interactive format enabled us to come up with new insights, critical perspectives as well as inspirations for future research and collaborative projects.

The workshop opened with a public lecture/keynote by Bela Feldman-Bianco, in which she historicized and problematized mega-notions, such as 'Global South', 'Global North', 'development', and 'post-colonialism', and also highlighted the relevance of in-depth local-level research for the understanding of both global economic and political processes as well as migrants' local and transnational practices. The rhetorical and conceptual usages of the term 'Global South' and their implications for policy and research were further discussed during the workshop. Participants came to understand that while it is essential to deconstruct mega-notions for research purposes, it is also vital to re-appropriate these terms as strategic/political tools in moments of grant-seeking, and more importantly, in view of newly emerging alliances among scholars and activists of the nation-states considered part of the so-called 'Global South'. Moreover, on the basis of exchanging insights from our individual research projects, we realized a wide variety of practices and processes that undercut dichotomous distinctions between 'North' and 'South', and that can only be understood against the background of historically and spatially embedded research.

The workshop ended with an invitation to continue thinking and exchanging ideas about new trends in migration research, which is facilitated by a mailing list (list-mobilities@uni-koeln.de). Interested individuals are welcome to join us and contribute to on-going discussions on 'Mobility within and to the Global South'.

Workshop participants: Tanja Bastia, Marina de Regt, Heike Drotbohm, Bela Feldman-Bianco, Laavanya Kahtiravelu, Olivia Kiliyas, Maggi Leung, Zhigang Li, Albert Manke, Anna-Maria Manz, Jonathan Ngeh, Michaela Pelican, Aranzazu Recalde, Tobias Schwarz, Brigitte Suter, Ida Vammen, Yang Zhou.

Workshop sponsors:

