

French Algeria in Comparative Perspective : A Specific Form of Settler Colonialism ?

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Type:

Workshop

Date:

June 9, 2016 to June 10, 2016

Location:

France

Subject Fields:

African History / Studies, Colonial and Post-Colonial History / Studies, Contemporary History, European History / Studies, Immigration & Migration History / Studies

Presentation

Settler colonialism is drawing increasing attention from scholars in diverse geographic and chronological contexts. Inspired by theoretical work, especially Australian colleagues such as Patrick Wolfe and Lorenzo Veracini, the concept of *settler colonialism* provides historians with a powerful tool for analyzing colonial situations characterized by the large scale arrival of immigrant colonists and the transfer of land from the hands of indigenous populations to the new arrivals.¹ The last five years have seen the foundation of a journal dedicated to the topic, *Settler Colonial Studies*, and a concerted effort to raise settler colonial studies into a distinct field of research. The success of the concept is such that one American historian recently wrote that “settler colonial theory has taken over my field, Native American studies.”² At the same time, practitioners of global history have portrayed the settlement of distant regions by Europeans, especially Anglophones, as a transnational phenomenon with environmental, epidemiological, economic, cultural, politique, and geopolitical effects on a global scale.³

If the concept of *settler colonialism* allows for a new comparative analysis of societies where colonists become demographically, as well as economically and politically, preponderant, following a “logic of elimination” (Wolfe), its intellectual rise is closely linked to current political questions: the situation of Aboriginal people in Australia, of Maoris in New Zealand, of Native Americans in the United States and Canada, and Palestinians in Israel/Palestine. The introduction of the journal *Settler Colonial Studies*, for example, explicitly locates its agenda within the context of these struggles by still-colonized peoples and presents the theorization of *settler colonialism* as essential to “post-colonial passages” in self-proclaimed democratic societies created by processes of settlement colonization.⁴ In its five years of existence, almost all of the articles published in its pages have concerned the former British colonies in North America and Oceania, and Israel/Palestine. Theoretically, the founders of this new research field depart from the presentist principle that settler colonialism is still underway and that settler colonies have not been decolonized.

The rise of settler colonial studies thus raises important questions about its reach beyond these specific contexts. Does the newly consensual concept of *settler colonialism* fit contexts where the eliminatory logic of settlement colonization was never fully realized and colonists did not become a

majority?

The proposed workshop seeks to answer this question by taking French Algeria as a case study, considered at once as paradigmatic of settler colonies, thanks in large part to the powerful influence of Franz Fanon's writings on settler-colonized relations, and as outside of the new *settler colonial theory* by virtue of its decolonization, a fact incompatible with a definition of settler colonialism as unfinished. Theorists themselves have tended to put Algeria in a separate category. Patrick Woolf, for instance, classifies French Algeria among what he calls "so-called settler colonies."⁵ Other typologies propose an intermediary category in which colonists seize the majority of land, but remain a demographic minority dependent on indigenous labor. For D.K. Fieldhouse, Algeria was a "mixed" colony⁶; for Jürgen Osterhammel, an "African" style settler colony.⁷

If historians of French Algeria have recently begun to contest this classification and to insist on the importance of European settlement in Algeria's colonial history, they have done so among themselves in specialized seminars and conferences. This workshop aims to move the debate forward by introducing an explicitly comparative perspective on processes of settlement, colonial social relations, and decolonization in a more formal setting. Encouraging comparative perspectives and bringing together specialists of French Algeria with experts on other colonies that shared its "intermediary" situation—New Caledonia, Ireland, Libya, South Africa, the German colonies in southern Africa, Kenya, and Mozambique—will allow us to cross geographical boundaries and to consider the place of these colonies within the broader world of European settler colonies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while at the same time collectively interrogating the reach of the concept of *settler colonialism* as it has developed so far.

¹ P. Woolf, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (Cassell, 1999); L. Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

² N. Shoemaker, "A Typology of Colonialism," *Perspectives on History*, 53:6 (2015), en ligne.

³ En particulier, A. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 1900-1900* (Cambridge, 1986); J. Weaver, *The Great Land Rush and the Making of the Modern World* (McGill-Queen's, 2003); M. Lake et H. Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge, 2008); J. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld* (Oxford, 2009).

⁴ L. Veracini, "Introducing *Settler Colonial Studies*," *Settler Colonial Studies*, 1 (2011): 8-9.

⁵ "Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race," *American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (2001): 868.

⁶ *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Study from the Eighteenth Century*, 2e édition (Macmillan, 1982), 250.

⁷ *Colonialism : A Theoretical Overview*, 2e édition, trans. Shelley Frisch (Princeton University Press, 2005), 12.

Program

THURSDAY 9 JUNE

PROCESSES OF SETTLEMENT

14h30 - 16h30

1. Conceptualizing Settlement

Arthur Asseraf (Oxford University), *Native category: settler imaginaries in the Mediterranean and the historians who write about them (Algeria, Libya, Israel)*

François Dumasy (Sciences Pô Aix-en-Provence/CHERPA), *La Libye, une 'colonisation de peuplement' au miroir de l'Algérie?* (sous réserve)

Thomas Grillot (CNRS/IRIS), *Is settler colonialism a relevant concept to understand Indian reservations?*

Didier Guignard (CNRS/IREMAM), *La logique du "front pionnier" absente en Algérie*

16h30 - 18h30

2. Emigrants and Settlers

Claude Lutzelschwab (Université de Neuchâtel), *L'Algérie coloniale, une terre d'implantation européenne. Mise en perspective africaine sous l'angle de l'histoire économique et sociale*

Anne Dulphy (Ecole Polytechnique/LinX-SHS/CHSP), *Les Espagnols en Algérie: les spécificités d'un peuplement par l'immigration*

Hugo Vermeren (Université de Paris Ouest-Nanterre La Défense), *Colonie de peuplement ou territoire d'immigration ? Les Italiens en Algérie pendant la période coloniale*

FRIDAY 10 JUNE

COLONIAL SITUATIONS

9h00 - 11h00

3. Settler Communities

Emmanuel Blanchard (Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines/CESDIP), *Formation d'une société coloniale et civilisation urbaine : les "Européens" d'Oran (années 1830-1840)*

Charlotte Chopin (University of London Institute in Paris), *Ce père bien aimé: the settler press, the Latin family and the presidential voyage of Emile Loubet, April 1903*

Elisabeth Zollmann (Université de Paris 4), *Le débat autour d'une représentation politique adéquate des colons. L'administration autonome dans les colonies allemandes en Afrique*

11h00 - 13h00

4. Science and Knowledge

Patrick Haries (Universität Basel/University of Cape Town), *Science and Civilization in a Settler Colony: South Africa*

Claire Fredj (Université de Paris Ouest-Nanterre), *Le médecin de colonisation : une présence médicale dans les campagnes algériennes (milieu du XIX^e s-milieu du XX^e siècle)*

Marie Salaun (Université de Paris-Descartes), *Nommer, classer, compter. De la difficulté à catégoriser la population d'une colonie de peuplement. Le cas des recensements en Nouvelle-Calédonie (1906-1946)*

VIOLENCES

14h00 - 16h00

5. Colonial Conflicts

Jennifer Sessions (University of Iowa/Institut d'Etudes Avancées de Paris), *Légitimer les violences ? Colonisation et insurrection au XIX^e siècle*

Dónal Hassett (European University Institute), *Théoriser le mouvement ancien combattant en Algérie coloniale : entre 'le monde du contact' et 'settler colonialism'*

Samuel André-Bercovici, (Université de Paris 1), *Les services des anciens combattants destinés aux vétérans Algériens et Européens en Algérie après 1945*

16h00 - 18h00

6. Mobilizations and Decolonizations

Sylvie Thénault (CNRS/CHS), *L'OAS avant l'OAS ? Du « contre-terrorisme » en Algérie, 1954-62*

Benoît Trépied (EHESS/IRIS), *Peut-on décoloniser une colonie de peuplement, et si oui comment ? Réflexion autour de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*

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