



**An ERSA Networking Workshop  
25, 26 September 2008  
Makaranga Lodge, Durban**

**Promoting Economic History  
in Southern African**



In association with the Economic History Society of Southern Africa

## **Introduction**

Studying the historical development of an economy provides a context for existing challenges and a source of hypotheses to explain the trajectory of that evolution. Economic history has become increasingly important as a framework for studying questions not just in economic history, but also in macroeconomics, microeconomics and development economics. The burgeoning body of empirical research with a historical character in these fields support to this claim.

This workshop is part of a strategic initiative that started in 2007 with a training workshop presented by Prof James Robinson of Harvard University. This current initiative has a broader focus, not only on quantitative economic history in the institutional tradition, but economic and business history in the broad sense. The aim of this networking workshop is to bring together a critical mass of South African researchers in the fields of economic and business history. To extend the network internationally, Dr. Martine Mariotti (currently at UCLA, but as from August she will be at the Australian National University) will be invited to attend. We would like to establish a relationship with her, firstly because of her impressive research on economic history (including her PdD under the late Prof Ken Sokoloff at UCLA) and we would benefit extensively from her input, and secondly this will be an opportunity to create a link with economic historians in North America and Australia.

With Dr. Mariotti as facilitator, the participants will be able to interact with each other, share their current research and discuss other possible research projects. The workshop will also be important in stimulating research dealing with economic and development issues facing the Southern African region.

This workshop will be followed by a workshop early in 2009, which will focus on the latest techniques used in the field. It is foreseen that Dr. Mariotti, with someone of her choice, will be the presenters of this training workshop. The research that flows from these workshops can be considered for two different sessions that was already accepted for the International Economic History Congress to be held in Utrecht, Netherlands in August 2009, one session being on business history and the other on quantitative African economic history. These events will strengthen the existing community of scholars in economic history in South Africa, but especially aims to expand their numbers to increase the weight of scholarship in this field. Support for existing scholars and the encouragement of new scholars will greatly strengthen the quality and volume of research on economic history in South Africa.

### **Motivation for the workshop:**

Internationally, Economic History as research field has gained considerable momentum in the last 5-10 years. The quantitative approach to economic history has driven much of this enthusiasm due to its promise of new ways to give substance to economic theories. At MIT, for example, Economic History has become a compulsory course in the graduate programme. However, this surge in popularity remains largely absent in South Africa.

The aim of the workshop is to bring together current researchers in the field of Economic History, as well as researchers in related fields such as business and management history working on South Africa and Southern Africa, to find ways of popularising the subject, and to provide a forum for researchers to present their

work in progress. As the workshop intends to build a network in this research area, participation is welcome even without paper contributions.

**Specific set of issues to be addressed by the workshop:**

- The importance of Economic History as research field
- Economic History taught at University level
- Quantitative research in Economic History
- Possible research topics

**Intended target audience:**

Academic researchers and postgraduate students in the fields of institutional economics, business history, African history, development studies and quantitative economics, set within the boundaries of economic history.

**Preliminary format of the workshop:**

We plan to present a 1 1/2 day workshop:

Thursday 25/09

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 09:00-10:00 | The importance of Economic History as research field (Dr Martine Mariotti)                      |
| 10:30-11:00 | Economic History taught at University level (Prof Grietjie Verhoef, University of Johannesburg) |
| 11:00-13:00 | Research in Economic History (various presenters)   |
| 14:00-15:00 | Research in Economic History (various presenters)   |
| 15:30-16:30 | Brainstorming: how to create interest in Economic History research                              |

Friday 26/09

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 08:30-09:30 | Research in Economic History (Dr Martine Mariotti)                       |
| 10:00-12:00 | Brainstorming: Possible research topics, cooperation between researchers |
| 12:00-12:30 | Conclusion   |

A gala workshop dinner will be held for all on Thursday evening.

**Applications:**

You are welcome to attend without presenting a paper, as this is a networking workshop. If you are an, or intent to become, an active economic history researcher, please send your name, academic affiliation and areas of interest to: Sophia du Plessis – [sophia@sun.ac.za](mailto:sophia@sun.ac.za) before 1 August 2008.

If you want to present a paper, please submit complete papers or extended abstracts (1-2 pages) as pdf-file together with full contact details by 1 August 2008 to: Sophia du Plessis – [sophia@sun.ac.za](mailto:sophia@sun.ac.za).

ERSA is able to offer financial support to cover travel and accommodation expenses to a limited number of research active members of any South African tertiary institution wishing to attend the workshop.

**Organising committee:**

Dr Sophia du Plessis  
Prof Grietjie Verhoef  
Prof Stan du Plessis  
Mr Krige Siebrits  
Mr Johan Fourie

**Contact person:**

Academic

Dr Sophia du Plessis  
Tel: +27 (0)21 808-2204  
Cell: +27 (0)82 374-9908  
sophia@sun.ac.za

Administrative

Gloria Halland  
Tel: +27 (0)21 650-5239  
Fax: +27 (0)21 650-2854  
gloria.halland@uct.ac.za