Writing trust into the history of capitalism(s): histories of Asia, Africa and Europe in a comparative perspective.

In keeping with the larger mandate of the network, the proposed workshop hopes to bring together scholars working on the histories of capital and circulation in Eurasia, Africa and the Indian Ocean to revisit the idea of trust and its usefulness as a heuristic concept. While the first two workshops under the IEARN network focused on the discourse and practices and technologies of trust while remaining mindful of their limits, this workshop addresses the broader subject of capitalism in the plural and how societies, especially colonized underwent transition to achieve their version of commercial and industrial development wherein, law, property relations, community networks and custom worked in unexpected ways to create the necessary pre-conditions. The workshop will invite scholars to revisit the theme of the stages in the transition to capitalism and to debate on its local manifestations and to synthesize the existing state of the art on networks of trust and the workings of law to be able to provoke new questions and assumptions. These are expected to cover not just the older debate on law versus custom but to ask the larger question about capitalism being a universal given in the early modern period when especially in South Asia trust protocols confronted both aggressive military fiscalism from states as well as from the new ideology of European corporations and trading companies. The impact of the latter and of the new regulatory apparatus of the imperial system will form the other major focus so as to engage with the conceptual significance and potential of a category such as vernacular capitalism. The workshop hopes to continue with the productive conversation across societies, to write Africa and Asia more substantively in the history of capitalism so as to be able to develop a genuinely connected histories approach to the problematic of capitalism, its antecedents, manifestations and after-life.

Sessions:

1. Capitalism in the plural: Reflections on vernacular capitalism
2. Law, Custom and trading networks: Europe, Asia and Africa
3. Recent trends in historiography on Oceans: comparing Indian and Atlantic Ocean worlds
4. Recap session: On the IEARN network, a panel discussion