



# TRAMES ARBORESCENTES



## Call for Papers

### ***Branches of Time. Thinking and Representing History through the Arboreal Motif***

**3rd INTH network Conference:  
“Place and Displacement: The Spacing of History”  
Stockholm, August 20th-22nd, 2018**

We are pleased to announce that *Trames Arborescentes* is preparing a panel proposal for the International Network for Theory of History (INTH) conference (<http://www.inth.ugent.be/conference>) that will take place in Stockholm on August 2018.

“Place and Displacement: The Spacing of History” has been chosen as the main theme for the aforementioned meeting. Within this framework, *Trames Arborescentes* has decided to participate by proposing a panel that will gather several speakers around the subject “Branches of Time. Thinking and Representing History through the Arboreal Motif”.

Proposals containing personal information (including academic affiliation), an abstract (up to 300 words), and a short bio are welcome for this panel. Documents may be submitted to our email address [tramesarborescentes@gmail.com](mailto:tramesarborescentes@gmail.com) before January 13, 2018.

Trames arborescentes:

Antoine Paris  
Orient et Méditerranée,  
Université de Paris  
Sorbonne

Pippa Salonijs  
SoPHIS, Monash  
University, Melbourne

Sergi Sancho Fibla  
Aix-Marseille Université,  
CNRS, TELEMMe

Naïs Virenque  
Centre d'Études  
Supérieures de la  
Renaissance, Tours

## Panel abstract:

### Branches of Time. Thinking and Representing History through the Arboreal Motif

This panel traces the arboreal motif through time, using it as a means to reflect on the making and the representation of History since Antiquity. Three main subjects will be taken into account: “Synchrony and Diachrony”, “Thinking Trees versus Teaching Trees” and “Growth as Progress”.

#### Synchrony and Diachrony:

The first point focuses on the shape of the tree. The Greek term for history (*historia*) referred to research through time and space. This research required the elaboration of a method for organizing, classifying and presenting information, either for the gathering or the disposition of processes. In this manner History produced a guide that was arranged and, at times, graphically represented. Yet the term “method” implies a system that proceeds by steps. Its original sense, from the Greek term *methodos*, aims at providing a path to follow according to a path already walked. Therefore, from its origins, this method incorporated both the writing, but also the making of history, as a spatial-temporal shift along a timeline. There is no other way to read an arboreal diagram, but in a temporal sense. Its branches are situated along a principal axis which leads to the chronological reading of its content.

This is precisely the backbone of all arboreal structures, which organize diachrony as a synoptic tool through a line of progression. Indeed, diagrammatical and schematic trees are used in the field of history in different shapes and patterns precisely because they are able to articulate both unity and developments (ramifications) in an itinerary based on succession. However, it is crucial to reflect on the effect these graphic or textual models have on history itself. We typically conceive them as mere distillations of complex historical events and ideas, but their cognitive benefits have already been proven. Likewise, while we acknowledge they are particularly well-suited to the field of history, is their use completely appropriate? Why? Why not?

#### Thinking Trees versus Teaching Trees

Our second point focuses on research and teaching. As a matter of fact, historians often use arboreal structures as analytical and pedagogical tools. However, are these models used to frame existing content or rather is it the form itself that is pre-existing and the historian brings to light? How are they combined or contrasted with other graphical tools like timelines and tables? Are there differences between the use of tree structures in research and in teaching? How and why would they be different?

#### Growth as Progress

These kinds of schematic representations are not shaped by a closed geometric figure, but by a form open to indefinite ramifications. In this way trees avoid a certain appearance of linearity. They challenge the idea of narrative chronology in favour of multidirectional temporality. In the final decades of the twentieth century arboreal structures became an object of poststructuralist thought, mainly because of their extremely rational and systematized function. Other models such as Deleuze’s rhizomes were placed in the spotlight in order to avoid synthetic structures. This highlights a political aspect of arboreal imagery. The vertical growth of tree schemata might be seen

as a foothold for the unfashionable concept of “progress”. We seek to gain a greater understanding of the political connotations conveyed by tree structures with a series of case studies that show how history has been instrumentalised by them.

We welcome papers that focus on these subjects and/or other aspects of arboreal structures and their use within the field of history.