



## INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

**Geneva, December 6-7 (Friday & Saturday), 2013**

**Organized by the Graduate Institute in partnership with the Pierre du Bois Foundation, in collaboration  
with the University of Geneva**

### Conveners

**Davide Rodogno (IHEID, International history) & Sandrine Kott (UNIGE, History)**

The Graduate Institute and the University of Geneva in partnership with the Fondation Pierre du Bois pour l'histoire du temps présent will study during a two-day conference the history of development politics and policies from the perspective of international organizations (inter-governmental, quasi-governmental, non-governmental, secular and faith-based, as well as philanthropic foundations). Throughout the period covered by our conference (1910s-1970s) bi-lateral (state-to-state) development programs coexisted with programs discussed and enforced through international organizations. Nonetheless, since the beginning of the twentieth century, development has been debated as an international issue and enforced internationally. We believe discussions that took place within the framework of international organizations allow us to better grasp the *Weltanschauung(en)* as well as the heterogeneous practices of international aid programs.

Conference participants will look at international organizations as *sites* where nation-states and non-governmental organizations, philanthropic foundations, as well as international experts hired directly by these organizations discussed multiple, and sometimes competing, visions of development. Participants will examine these international organizations as *laboratories* where panoply of programs, projects and other kinds of actions were set up and eventually enforced. In so doing the conference explores development discourses, practices and power-related issues going beyond a state-centric perspective.

The objective of the conference is to shed light on the history of development from the perspective(s) of international organizations. The conference emphasizes a number of connections – chronological and thematic – often overlooked by scholars. It is also revisionist in a number of ways. First, we deem the First World War and interwar years as an incubation period for international development visions and plans. Scholars persuasively demonstrated

that New Deals experiences mattered when, at the end of the Second World War, Bretton Woods and other UN institutions set up their programs. However, since the 1920s, on a less ambitious scale, the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization had completed international technical assistance schemes. Colonial officers and planners often inspired these politics. Furthermore imperial powers carried out such policies on a wider scale in their own colonial possessions. Numerous experts involved in these early undertakings produced knowledge and leveraged a know-how largely mobilized during the Second World War and after 1945.

Second, the specific perspective of the conference allows us to expand on the funding matrixes of development politics and policies: wars, post-war and imperial/colonial and post-colonial contexts. Scholars working on development generally work on them separately focusing on one or the other alternatively. The point we make is that within international organizations these matrixes often conflate. For instance, international development programs set up in the late 1940s were a ‘natural’ continuation of international rehabilitation and reconstruction programs undertaken by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. The term administration, which prominently appeared in the first UN agency, was a legacy of older international organizations such as the American Relief Administration, signalling the ambition to govern, in a bureaucratic and scientific (i.e. ‘modern’) way, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development of target-populations. The conduct and planning of war economies as well as the weakening of European metropolises in the aftermath of the First World War led to a number of reflections. They were undertaken at the national and international level; one could mention the debates on economic and social development in the colonies, as illustrated by the international treaties on slavery and forced labour in the 1920s. In 1919 as well as 1945, newly established international organizations conceived and implemented international plans intended to ensure durable peace and prosperity for all. The war itself was a moment when these politics emerged and were enforced. The Cold War and decolonization triggered new impulses and strengthened the assumption, still thriving today, that ‘under-development’ leads to insecurity and threatens peace. It was within international organizations that a variety of actors articulated the connection between peace and prosperity through development. The conference intends to show that international organizations are a very useful object of historical enquiry, one which helps us to unfold this complex entanglement of contexts that shaped international development ideas and projects.

## **Tentative programme: panels, chairs, and participants**

### **Introduction**

**Sandrine Kott (UNIGE, Histoire générale) &  
Davide Rodogno (IHEID, International history)**

### **Panel 1**

*Roots of International Development (1914-1938)*

Focus: This panel highlights the origins of international development from the perspective of international organizations. Participants will explore technical assistance programs as well as programs funded and/or implemented by philanthropic foundations and other non-state organizations (i.e. international associations).

**Chair: David Ekbladh** (Prof., Tufts University)

**Branden Little** (Dr., Weber State, Utah)     *The First World War and its aftermath; the American experience*

**Ludovic Tournès** (Prof., Université, Genève)     *Exportation of development through philanthropic foundations.*

**Véronique Plata** (Assistant, Université, Genève)     *The ILO technical assistance practices in the Balkans and Latin America*

**Benjamin White** (Lecturer, Birmingham)     *The League of Nations mandates in Syria*

### **Panel 2**

*Colonial legacies*

**Chair: JP Daughton** (Prof., Stanford)

**Joseph Hodge** (Prof., West-Virginia)     *Internationalization of development practices and discourse from British Empire to international organizations' officers.*

**Martin Rempe** (Dr., Konstanz)     *Internationalization of development practices from the French Empire to the European Economic commission.*

**Alexander Keese** (PD Dr., Humboldt Berlin)     *The Lusophone world.*

### **Panel 3**

*From Relief & Rehabilitation to Development as international plans during the 1940s*

Focus: How post-war relief and rehabilitation programs fostered a new approach of international development plans

**Chair : Jessica Reinisch** (Lecturer, Birkbeck, University of London)

**Heide Fehrenbach** (Prof., Northern Illinois) *The Rehabilitation of orphaned children*

**Silvia Salvatici** (Prof., Teramo University) *UNRRA and its vision of development. Some empirical evidence on the Italian case.*

**David Webster** (Prof., Bishop's University) *The birth of UN Technical Assistance scheme*

**Michele Alacevich** (Prof., Columbia, New York)  
*The World Bank and the Bretton Wood development programs*

### **Panel 4**

*Development as a “postcolonial” project?*

Focus: International plans as a by-product of decolonization

**Chair: Sunil Amrith** (Reader, Birkbeck, University of London)

**Daniel Speich** (Prof., Luzern) *How decolonization fostered discussion on development within international organization*

**Corinna Unger/Marc Frey** (Prof., Bremen) *Rural Development and the World Bank.*

**Julia Tischler** (Postdoc, Humboldt, Berlin)  
*Development from the grassroots: the Kariba Dam project.*

**Shaloma Gauthier** (Assistant, IHEID, Genève)  
*Development and state-building in Congo*

## **Panel 5**

*Actors and spaces of international development programs.*

Focus: Development beyond “post-colonial” issues; “longue durée” plans of development in Europe and Latin America.

**Chair: Madeleine Herren** (Prof., Basel)

**Sandrine Kott** (Prof., Université, Genève) *From Western development projects in Eastern Europe to competing projects of development in the South. (ECE)*

**Vincent Legendijk** (Postdoc., Maastricht) *The World Bank/UN in Mekong and Indus River*

**Corinne Pernet** (Prof., St Gallen) *Latin America as a testing ground for large development plans.*

**Heike Wieters** (Postdoc., Humboldt, Berlin) *CARE in Colombia and « faith ». Development in Latin America in a “religious” perspective.*

**Maria Leticia Galluzzi Bizzo** (Prof., Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) *Brazil: from the League of Nations to the FAO (1932-1956).*

**T. David & D. Rodogno** (Prof., Lausanne/ IHEID) *The WHO Newsletter and World Health (1948-1968): selling health and development to wider audiences*

## **Concluding roundtable (tentative)**

Shalini Randeria (HEID, Genève)

Kiran Patel (Maastricht university)

Bertrand Taithe (Manchester University)

Andreas Eckert (Humboldt University Berlin, professeur invité, Genève)