

Networks in Times of Transition. Toward a Transcultural History of International Organisations

Veranstalter: Madeleine Herren, Cluster of Excellence „Asia and Europe in a Global Context“, Research Project „Networking the International System“, Heidelberg University

Datum, Ort: 21.10.2010-22.10.2010, Heidelberg

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In research on twentieth century history, investigation of international organizations, ranging from transboundary terrorist networks to international relief organizations, has received widespread attention recently. Some organizations, e.g. the United Nations, have become major global players today. The conference „Networks in Times of Transition“, organized in October 2010 by MADELEINE HERREN (University of Heidelberg) from the Cluster of Excellence „Asia and Europe in a Global Context“ of Heidelberg University, aimed to combine historical research with contemporary ideas on the role of international organizations in transboundary work and efforts of global understanding. The conference focused on three key issues in historical research on international organizations: 1) preservation and transfer of knowledge about international organization's history; 2) the border between constitutional networks and civil actors; 3) the role of border-transcending information processes in former and contemporary debates.¹

Keynote speaker KENCHIRO HIRANO (Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, Tokyo) opened the conference with a speech on Japan's role in the context of League of Nations policies at the eve of World War II. He argued that the effects of the Manchurian crisis on the League of Nations damaged its functioning more than any other conflict the League had ever been confronted with. Hirano also claimed that Japan's withdrawal

from the League was a decisive „turning point“ towards the outbreak of World War II.

Historical research on global history often requires documents and sources from archives throughout the world. Panel I, „The Archival Materiality of International Organizations“ led by conference convener Madeleine Herren, focussed on preservation of international history, especially in times of war and crisis. JENS BOEL (UNESCO, Paris) gave insights into the role and workflows of UNESCO Archives. He stressed the importance of digitalization and online access to contents of traditional archives. In case of „lost archives“ – for example German archives, which were moved for „scientific reasons“ to the USA after World War II – digitalization could facilitate historical research. SIGRUN HABERMANN-BOX (UNOG Library and Universal Archives, Geneva) explained the complex process of document preservation of the UNOG Library and Archives in Geneva. Habermann-Box highlighted the power of registry and the fact that documents of organizations such as the United Nations are primarily kept for daily political business and secondarily for historical research. Both speakers, Habermann-Box and Boel, stressed that, without the preservation and selection of important documents, digitalization for historical research purposes will be difficult. Yet another angle was introduced by SACHA ZALA (University of Berne, Swiss Diplomatic Documents) who presented, by the example of the „dodis“ database (Diplomatic Documents of Switzerland), perspectives on digitalization of Swiss and international source materials. Zala emphasized that in order to „materialize the networks of international organizations“, it is not only important to present documents online, but also linking different databases to each other. He stated that besides diplomatic documents or personal files, religious documents, oral documents, videos and pictures should not be forgotten in the process of digitalization. In the discussions of the panel, it was agreed that on-going digitalization of international organizations material will facilitate international research on this field.

What influences networks in international organizations, and what are the impacts of

¹ Cornelia Knab: Conference: Networks in Times of Transition. Towards a Transcultural History of International Organisations, in: <<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/termine/id=14731>> (21.01.2011).

these networks on society or politics? The following conference panels highlighted these questions and offered insights into structure and function of international networks. Panel II on „Foreign Science Policy“ began with the contribution of TOMOKO AKAMI (Australian National University, Canberra), who spoke about “Pacific Science Networks in the Era of Empire and War (1920-39)”. Akami presented the Pan-Pacific Congress as an example of international scientific collaboration in the age of the League of Nations. She investigated how scientific networks had been influenced by national politics, but also the impact personal contacts had on the networks’ activities. ATSUSHI SHIBASAKI (Komazawa University) presented „Activities and International Cultural Relations in Modern Japan (1943-54)“ by example of the Kokusai Bunka Shinko Kai (International Cultural Relations Society). Shibasaki concluded that the relatively small but very active organization did not aim to establish international cultural cooperation for better mutual understanding, but for promotion of a „superior“ Japanese culture overseas. TAKASHI SAIKAWA (University of Heidelberg) presented research about the League of Nations’ „International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC)“ and hereby outlined yet another aspect on Asian cultural foreign politics. Saikawa focused on the role of Japan and China in the ICIC –the former being an enthused advocate, the latter an outspoken objector within the Committee. In her contribution „A Transcultural History of International Organisations“ MAYA OKUDA (University of Heidelberg) focused on the League of Nations as a framework for Japan’s national culture politics. All three contributions pointed out that international organizations and transnational cooperation served as a stage for promoting (own) national culture for governments and non-government organizations. Discussant RUDOLF WAGNER (University of Heidelberg) argued that cultural cooperation had mostly been cooperation of international patriots, and therefore it was a tool in winning the war by propagandistic means.

Panel III, titled „Intangible Cultural Heritage“, examined the role of culture in inter-

national contexts from the beginning of the 20th century to the 21st century. TIMOTHY D. TAYLOR (University of California, Los Angeles) talked about culture and its connection to identity. He argued that in the context of fundamental processes of change such as the ongoing digitalization and intensified use of the internet, a high amount of cultural influences were transferred from one part of the world to another. While this could be seen as a chance to increase cultural variation, these transfer processes could as well be interpreted as cultural imperialism. The role of UNESCO in this context, protecting „masterpieces of the intangible heritage of humanity“, is thus both important and ambivalent. Taylor demonstrated this ambiguity by example of the Guqin: these traditional Chinese music instruments were suddenly sold overpriced after the Guqin had become a UNESCO masterpiece in 2003. This example shows that protection by UNESCO can result in cultural commercialization. In his talk „Folklore and International Cooperation in the 1930s. The Case of CIAP and the League of Nations“ BJARNE ROGAN (University of Oslo) presented further insights on international organizations and culture in the years before the Second World War. Rogan showed the ambivalent attitude the League of Nations had towards popular or folkloristic culture. He argued that controversies on folk art within the League were stirred by national rivalries and how they were also seen as tools for cultural hegemony.

KATJA PATZEL-MATTERN (University of Heidelberg) opened Panel IV: „Global Knowledge Economy“ with a lecture on „Dimensions of German Economic and Fiscal Politics during the Crises of the 1930s“. She argued that, in order to explain German economic and fiscal policy of the early 1930s, international structures and transnational concepts had to be taken into account. SUNIL S. AMRITH (Birkbeck, University of London) also focused on the interwar period. In his contribution „Internationalizing Public Health in South and Southeast Asia, 1919-1939“ he depicted the topic on the basis of trans-regional healthcare networks created by the League of Nations or the Rockefeller Foundation. According to Amrith, these networks played an important part in shaping ideas about health-

care in Asia. SANDRINE KOTT (University of Geneva) focussed in her contribution „Conflicting Views on Labour“ on the role of international organizations during the Cold War. She emphasized that the examination of international organizations should be used as a vehicle to study global history. She also pointed out, that it is not adequate to speak of an organization as „the“ League of Nations, or „the“ ILO, because of the multiplicity of actors and influences in this area.

In Panel V, „Concepts of International Organizations“, TOSHIKI MOGAMI (International Christian University, Tokyo) shared thoughts on the centralization of international organizations and the influence of their location on their policies in his speech „The Motor of Centralization or an Empty Center?“ He emphasized that, while most international organizations were centralistically based in Europe or the US, modern international organizations could be constitutionalized anywhere without being centralized. CRAIG N. MURPHY (University of Massachusetts, Boston) spoke in his talk „Global Governance: from Organizations to Networks or not?“ about the changing nature of international organizations from the 19th century on. According to Murphy, the change from a more hierarchical system to one based on personal networks has its roots both in the changing problems which today's society has to face and in a growing influence of non-European players in international networks with less hierarchical structures. In his contribution „The International Order in Disarray“ PREM SHANKAR JHA (Author/Journalist, India) addressed some of these current problems of international organizations. Jha discussed the post-Cold War power shift and the efforts of the US and NATO to restore their power which led to the backlash of international networks like Al Qaida.

The following Panel VI, „Practices of Networking“ was comprised of two sub-Panels of which Panel VIa „Large Dams and Small Germs“ focused on international aspects on diseases and disease control, and Panel VIb „Global Curricula and Global Subjects“ was dedicated to international concepts on social activities.

In Panel VIb KATJA NAUMANN (Univer-

sity of Leipzig) presented her research on the international commission for a „Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind (SCHM)“ (1959-1969). She pointed out that while it was often assumed that impulses in developments of a global historiography came mainly from the US, the project of SCHM, which had been influenced by scholars from all over the world, teaches us otherwise. In her talk on the rescue of Polish children during the Second World War by bringing them into the Indian Princely States, ANURADHA BHATTACHARJEE (Mudra Institute of Communications, Ahmedabad) described hidden connections between European and Indian history. The role of the YMCA in China's search for a new national identity and internationalization was displayed by GUOQI XU (University of Hong Kong). Xu examined the influence the YMCA had on establishing modern sports in China, Chinese efforts to host the Olympic Games, and on the Chinese obsession with international recognition and the quest for a national identity.

In Panel VII „Western Associations, Eastern Networks“, SHIN KAWASHIMA (University of Tokyo) gave an insight into the Sino-Japanese diplomatic incidents over textbook contents after the outbreak of the Manchurian Crisis in 1931. This example shows how cultural or scientific subjects were turned into issues of international politics. LI CHANG (Academia Sinica, Taipei) spoke about the „United Nations Special Fund and Developing Country: A Case Study of Taiwan's Experience in the 1960s“. He showed the impact of the newly established UN Special Fund on Taiwan's economy during the 1960s and 1970s and visualized which changes international organizations can bring on a national level. UDO SIMON (University of Heidelberg) turned the focus back on international networks by presenting findings about Islamic networks. The „umma“, as the global community of believers is called, also organizes itself into international networks, some of which are partially government controlled NGOs. In her final remarks, convener Madeleine Herren presented desiderata in research on the history of international networks, such as the role of civil society in relation to international organizations, the his-

tory of social border crossing movements beginning in the late 1960s or a debate on the state model versus networks. She added that for examining networks in times of transition, it would be necessary to „observe the globe from below”: investigating the influence of common civil servants on the work-flows and character of international organizations. Within the conference the organizers launched a new research database, the „League of Nations Search Engine” (LON-SEA). The database is based upon on the League of Nations’ Handbook of International Organisations and the League of Nations’ Personal Files of Employees. LON-SEA was built to facilitate research on personal networking within the context of international organizations. The database is therefore the beginning of the ongoing research process to investigate ninety years of global governance.²

Conference Overview:

Introduction: Madeleine Herren (University of Heidelberg)

Keynote Kenichiro Hirano (Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, Tokyo): Matsuoka Yosuke’s Miscalculation at Geneva: A Possible Reconsideration by Using JACAR Data

Panel I: The Archival Materiality of International Organisations

Chair: Cornelia Knab (University of Heidelberg)

Discussant: Madeleine Herren (University of Heidelberg)

Jens Boel (UNESCO Archives, Paris): The UNESCO History Project and Universal Archives.

Sigrun Habermann-Box (UNOG Library and Archives, Geneva): From the League of Nations to the United Nations: The Continuing Preservation and Development of the Geneva Archives.

Sacha Zala (University of Berne/Swiss Diplomatic Documents): Materialising the Networks of International Organisations. Perspectives on Swiss and International Digital

Resources.

Panel II: Foreign Science Policy

Chair: Cord Arendes (University of Heidelberg)

Discussant: Rudolf G. Wagner (University of Heidelberg)

Tomoko Akami (Australian National University, Canberra): Scientific International Collaboration in the Era of Empires and War: Japanese Scientists and the Pan-Pacific Science Congress, 1920–39.

Atsushi Shibasaki (Komazawa University): Activities and Discourses on International Cultural Relations in Modern Japan: the Making of KBS (Kokusai Bunka Shinko Kai), 1934–53.

Takashi Saikawa (University of Heidelberg): From Intellectual Cooperation to International Cultural Exchange: Japan and China in the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, 1922–39.

Maya Okuda (University of Heidelberg): A Transcultural History of International Organizations: the Case of Japan and the League of Nations.

Panel III: Intangible Cultural Heritage? – Attention – Change of Panel Order

Chair: Isabella Löhr (University of Heidelberg)

Discussant: Corinne Pernet (University of St. Gallen)

Timothy D. Taylor (University of California, Los Angeles): The New Capitalism, Networks, and the Reenchantment of Culture.

Bjarne Rogan (University of Oslo): Folklore and International Cooperation in the 1930s. The Case of CIAP and the League of Nations.

Launch of Database LONSEA (Venue: Prinz Carl Palais, Kornmarkt 1, 69117 Heidelberg)

Panel IV: Global Knowledge Economy

Chair: Amalia Ribi (University of Oxford)

Discussant: Klaas Dykmann (Roskilde Universitet)

Katja Patzel-Mattern (University of Heidelberg): „Not only a German but also a European interest.” Dimensions of German Economic and Fiscal Policies during the Crises of

²League of Nations Search Engine (LONSEA)
<<http://www.lonsea.de/>> (21.01.2011).

the 1930s.

Sunil S. Amrith (Birkbeck, University of London): Internationalizing Public Health in South and Southeast Asia, c. 1919-1939.

Sandrine Kott (University of Geneva): Conflicting Views on Labor. Which Role for International Organizations in Cold War Time?

Panel V: Concepts of International Organisations

Chair: Caroline Authaler (University of Heidelberg)

Discussant: Roland Wenzlhuemer (University of Heidelberg)

Craig N. Murphy (University of Massachusetts, Boston): Global Governance: from Organizations to Networks or not?

Prem Shankar Jha (Author/Journalist, India): International Order in Disarray. Systematic Chaos and the End of Nation-state Capitalism.

Toshiki Mogami (International Christian University, Tokyo): The Motor of Centralization or An Empty Center?

Panel VI (parallel panels): Practices of Networking

Panel VIa: Large Dams and Small Germs

Chair: Madeleine Herren (University of Heidelberg)

Discussant: Paul Weindling (Oxford Brookes University)

Cornelia Knab (University of Heidelberg): How the Cows Became Dangerous: Transnational Perspectives on the Handling of Zoonotic Diseases in the Early Twentieth Century.

Naomi Nagata (Nagoya Gakuin University): International Control of Epidemic Diseases in Historical and Cultural Perspective.

Marcus Nüsser (University of Heidelberg): Large Dams and Social Movements: the Practice of International Networking.

Panel VIb: Global Curricula and Global Subjects Attention – Change of Panel Order

Chair: Antje Flüchter (University of Heidelberg)

Discussant: Johannes Paulmann (University

of Mannheim)

Katja Naumann (University of Leipzig): UNESCO and the Globalization of History Curricula – The International Commission for a „Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind“ (1952-1969).

Anuradha Bhattacharjee (Mudra Institute of Communications, Ahmedabad): The Polish Citizens of Nawanagar in India.

Guoqi Xu (University of Hong Kong): Networking through the Y: The Role of YMCA in China's Search for New National Identity and Internationalization.

Panel VII: Western Associations, Eastern Networks?

Chair: Jessica R. Lenz (University of Heidelberg)

Discussant: Joachim Kurtz (University of Heidelberg)

Shin Kawashima (University of Tokyo): Sino-Japanese Controversies over Textbook Problems and the League of Nations.

Li Chang (Academia Sinica, Taipei): The United Nations Special Fund and the Developing Country: A Case Study of Taiwan's Experience in the 1960s.

Udo Simon (University of Heidelberg): Islamic Networks in Transnational Space

Tagungsbericht *Networks in Times of Transition. Toward a Transcultural History of International Organisations*. 21.10.2010-22.10.2010, Heidelberg, in: H-Soz-u-Kult 07.02.2011.