

Historical Development Experiences in Comparative Perspective. Postgraduate Winter School

Veranstalter: Institute of History, ETH Zurich

Datum, Ort: 23.01.2011-28.01.2011, Monte Verità

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In his opening keynote of the Winter School on the History of Development, GERALD HÖDL (Vienna) provided an excellent introduction to the aims of the Winter School by arguing that the concept of development needs to be historicised beyond the traditional focus on the Truman Doctrine and the United Nations. Rather, historians of development need to look back on the colonial era in order to discern continuities, discontinuities and ruptures in development practice and discourse. Hödl also identified a „Cycle of Development“, which he identifies as beginning in the early 20th century, which moves from stimulating capitalist production to ecological and social stabilisation. This cycle highlights the role of development not only in serving economic interests but also as an instrument of control: two themes which would animate the rest of the Winter School.

The aim of the Winter School was to establish a network of researchers working on topics related to the history of development and, through this communication, work on a new research framework for a comparative history of development experiences drawing on all participants' ongoing or completed work. For that reason, a wide range of disciplines, regional interests and academic levels were represented. In order to achieve its aim to, not only encourage further collaborative work between researchers, but also to achieve some first steps towards new research frameworks, the Winter School organisers, DANIEL SPEICH (Zürich) and SARA ELMER (Zürich), arranged an innovative and unique programme. Participants were assigned to small discussion groups, based not on regional expertise or disciplinary background, but on broader research interests. These groups, guided by questions provided by the organisers, discussed and produced

presentations on their shared research interest, but also came up with key themes that should be discussed in the second half of the Winter School.

A variety of keynote lectures provided insights into current research in the history of development and also served to inform and guide larger group discussion. The second keynote of the week, CORINNA UNGER's (Bremen) lecture emphasised the importance of analysis of power in the history of development, but added further nuance by introducing the idea of development as an entanglement of power and „doing good“. She outlined the primary uses of aid as an incentive, a punishment, a public acknowledgement of co-operation, a means of influence, a way to promote investment and a tool to shape the future development of nations. In the final keynote HUBERTUS BÜSCHEL (Giessen), further explored the importance of culture, and particularly, cultural difference and signifiers on the ground with development practitioners. Making fascinating use of a variety of visual sources available to historians, Büschel made a strong argument for a closer examination of culture in the history of development as well as greater use of the sources available to historians outside the archives.

One such source, viewed and discussed at the School was video propaganda material produced by development agencies; one a Belgian mining company in colonial Congo, the other for the training of Swiss volunteers for posting abroad. These insights into how the practitioners of development viewed themselves, and the image they wished to present to the outside world prompted discussion on the importance of considering both the history of the practitioners as well as the underdeveloped nations. And, further insight into the world of the practitioners of development was given by two interviews with now-retired practitioners. Two evening programmes were organised to allow participants to meet and discuss development with two practitioners from the Swiss development industry: Anne-Marie Holenstein, one of the founding members of the Bern Declaration spoke on her activism from the Bern Declaration to a range of food policy campaigns. Her involvement with a variety of internationally

high-profile campaigns sprang from a grass-roots activism and dedication to global social justice, and many of the projects she worked on proved successful, in raising awareness of a variety of food policy issues. On the other hand, Theo von Fellenberg, former expert for Swiss Development Corporation DEZA, presented on „Does it make sense? Looking back to the pioneering days of Swiss foreign aid“. His critical view of the aid industry and development practice emphasised the importance of learning from history, talking about his frustrating experiences as a young volunteer in South Asia and later as an expert in Rwanda. He and his colleagues often did not understand the local situation and what they are really doing there. But, even though he strongly criticized the development industry, he remains attached to it till today. Both witnesses' presentations led to lively discussion then, and later, about how and when to use witness reports in history-writing and what challenges it can present.

JONATHAN HARWOOD's (Manchester) presentation brought out the importance of history to the practice of the development industry. Identifying several key stages in the transformation of agricultural development practice, Harwood argued that the successes of internal European projects to modernise and improve peasant agriculture have been ignored by subsequent development literature. ARAM ZIAI's (Hamburg) presentation, „The neoliberal turn in development“ also identified key stages in the changing discourses on development, marking a shift from development to globalisation, in which globalisation does not merely represent growing interconnectedness but rather the power of the global economy and also transforming the development dichotomy of developed and underdeveloped to a range of actors, all equal in front of the market. The twofold nature of this analysis was picked up by some participants and it was suggested that the two discourses; development and globalisation could be usefully disaggregated and a variety of connections between the concepts discovered.

The week concluded with new small groups being formed around the themes suggested in the first round of discussions. This new way of organising group discussion al-

lowed participants not only to raise relevant themes and choose the group of most interest to them, but also the discussion on the relative merits of different themes raised some questions on issues that appeared to have been missing from previous discussions. Definitional difficulties were also raised, not least around the term development itself. This large group discussion served to raise questions for the following small group discussion. The results of the second small group discussion were presented on the final day, on the topics of; „Race, Class and Gender“, „The use and production of history in relation to development periodization and change“, „Implementation“ and „Preservation and Use of Knowledge“. The concluding presentations highlighted some key issues which participants felt had been left out of the more general discussion, as well as highlighting some useful areas for future research. The group discussing the use and production of history raised a number of important questions on how history is used, particularly in moments of rupture and change in development. Discussion on knowledge production focused on sources, the group provided an in-depth analysis of one of the film sources viewed earlier in the week on the Belgian Congo, prompting debate on how audio and visual material could be utilised effectively. Processes of negotiation and resistance were raised by the implementation group, and CORINNE PERNET (St. Gallen) suggested that further research was needed on local actors at the lower-to-middle-level of development institutions. MICHAELA KRENCEYOVA (Vienna) noted that class, which used to be central to debates on development, has faded from use in the past twenty years, while Hubertus Büschel noted that development histories focused on gender were missing. On a more general level, an appeal was made, particularly by GLORY M. LUEONG (Berlin), to look at entangled histories of how development works and question the notion of North-South transfer, for a more nuanced, multivalent view.

The Winter School was organized to endow the participants with a broader picture of their research topic and a range of possible connections to other historical development ex-

periences. Immediate feed-back of the participants was that it was very successful and a new network for discussion and collaboration has been established.

Conference overview:

Invited Guests and Organizers

Keynote Speakers

Hubertus Büschel, International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC), Justus-Liebig-University Giessen.

Keynote: Cultures of Knowing and Healing Poverty: Discourses and Practices of Need and Help in (Post-)Colonial Developmental Aid

Jonathan Harwood, Centre for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine, University of Manchester

Keynote: Technical knowledge and agricultural development: Has a cumulative learning-process taken place?

Gerald Hödl, Department of African Studies, University of Vienna

Keynote: Prologue or First Act? Historical Continuities and Discontinuities of Colonial Development

Corinna Unger, Jacobs University Bremen

Keynote: The Power of Development: American Public and Private Development Aid to the 'Third World' in the Cold War Era

Aram Ziai, Institute of Political Science, University of Hamburg

Keynote: The neoliberal turn in development

Witnesses

Anne Anne-Marie Holenstein

Interview and discussion on: From the Bern Declaration to Food Policy Campaigns (1968-1982)

Theo von Fellenberg

Interview and discussion on: Does it make sense? Looking back to the pioneering days of Swiss foreign aid

Organizers

Sara Elmer, Chair of History of the Modern World, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETHZ)

Harald Fischer-Tiné, Chair of History of the Modern World, Swiss Federal Institute of

Technology Zurich (ETHZ)

Daniel Speich, Chair of the History of Technology, ETH Zürich, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETHZ)

Participants

Stefan Becker: Built space on the borders of societies – About critical junctures in urban spaces (Rio de Janeiro – Luanda – Lissabon);

Andrew Bowman: Stabilising change: Knowledge, expertise and the contradictions of rural development in Zambia, 1945-2010;

Lipokmar Dzuwichu: Roads for development? Re-visiting a region's developmental puzzle;

Carola Eugster: The Western German military aid to African states in the Cold War;

Carsten Gräbel: Exploring the colonies. Expeditions and the epistemic culture of German geographers;

Patricia Hongler: Tanzanian modernization and Swiss solidarity in the 1970s: Negotiating development with Ujamaa Coffee;

Alke Jenss: Transformation of the state in context of neoliberal globalisation processes. Experiences from Colombia and Mexico;

Rachel Kantrowitz: Post-War Development and Social Politics in French West Africa: Re-examining Colonial-Metropolitan Relations;

Michaela Krenceyova: Development and Human Rights. Tracing the roots of Empowerment through Rights Based Development in African Discourses;

Juliane Lang: The role of volunteers in the educational sector of development cooperation;

Glory M.Lueong: 'Cultural essentialism of the Baka 'pygmies' in Cameroon: A study on the 'naturalization' of violence and exclusion in the South and East regions';

Harsha Maharjan: Politics of 'communication for development'. Intentions and consequences of the National Communication Services Plan 1971 in Nepal (1970-1990).

Guia Migani: The EEC Development Aid between Third-Worldism and Cold War (1972-

1986);

Corinne Pernet: Recipes for modernity. The politics of food, development and cultural heritage;

Katharina Pohl: 'To be good at development aid is just as important as being good at skiing', On the role of 'development aid' in constituting Norwegian and German autostereotypes;

Martin Rempe: Decolonization by Europeanization? The EEC and the transformation of French-African development co-operation;

Anna Barbara Sum: 'The Visiting-Economist Syndrome' – Albert O. Hirschman and expert culture in development economics, c. 1945-1970.

Christine Whyte: Whose slavery? The language and politics of slavery and abolition in Sierra Leone 1898-1956.

Lukas Zürcher: Global positioning and local cooperation. Swiss missionary and development endeavours in Rwanda (1900-1975).

Tagungsbericht *Historical Development Experiences in Comparative Perspective. Postgraduate Winter School*. 23.01.2011-28.01.2011, Monte Verità, in: H-Soz-u-Kult 07.04.2011.