

## How to Change the World

**Veranstalter:** Center for the History of Global Development / David F. Musto Center for Drug Policy Studies, Shanghai University; Centre for the Social History of Health and Healthcare, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow; Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva

**Datum, Ort:** 26.05.2017–28.05.2017, Shanghai

**Bericht von:** Iris Borowy, College of Liberal Arts, Shanghai University

From 26 to 28 May 2017, Shanghai University hosted a conference on the history of development, programmatically entitled „How to Change the World“. It was jointly organized by the Center for the History of Global Development, the David F. Musto Center for Drug Policy Studies (both Shanghai University), the Centre for the Social History of Health and Healthcare (University of Strathclyde, Glasgow), and the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (Geneva). For the recently established Center for the History of Global Development it represented the first major event designed to connect it to other international scholars working in this field.

Being the first event of the Center, the conference took a comprehensive approach rather than being narrowly focused. The large number of submissions testified to the timeliness of the topic, though it forced the organizers to make painful choices, having to reject numerous good papers in the interest of coherence. The result was a collection of presentations that, as participants repeatedly commented, engaged in fruitful dialogue with one another. Topics ranged from healthcare to industrialization and theatre, from the nineteenth century to the present and from Latin America to Europe and to China. Nevertheless, within this diversity recurring themes emerged.

One such theme, not surprisingly, concerned the difficulty of defining „developments“ and its core elements. Thus, the conference began with a keynote lecture by ALEXANDER NÜTZENADEL (Humboldt University of Berlin) reviewing recent debates on the historical evolution of global economic inequality. In which he pointed out the ambivalence

between, on the one hand, undoubted persisting global inequality, and, on the other, the problematic processes involved in quantifying or even defining such inequality. Different calculation methods invariably brought about different results, and difficulties of establishing the purchasing power, non-monetary income or living standards of different groups at different times called into question simplistic conclusions about socio-economic status and its historical development. Consequently, all findings regarding past income and wealth inequality needed to be carefully historicized and contextualized.

Similarly, STEPHEN MACEKURA (Indiana University, Bloomington), in his analysis of problematic efforts to reconcile evolving international accounting with the economic reality in Rhodesia in the 1940s, and HARALD FISCHER-TINÉ (ETH Zurich), in his account of the discrepancies between the views of US development experts and local circumstances in mid-century South Asia, addressed the difficulties of giving precise meaning to a vague concept. Other papers revealed how this absence of universally accepted meaning encouraged various actors to use the concept to legitimize a broad spectrum of policies. Several speaker shower how „development“ was evoked to justify controversial measures, including the limitation of food aid to Ireland 1845-52 (NORBERT GÖTZ, Södertörn University, Stockholm), or plainly contradictory energy policies in Argentina during the 1950s (SALVADOR MARINARO, CEILCONICET/Shanghai University).

Directly or indirectly, many presentations involved issues of North-South relations. GREGG MITMAN (Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, Munich / University of Wisconsin-Madison) set the stage with the screening of his film on *The Land Beneath our Feet. Land Rights in Liberia*. It connected footage of the appropriation of Liberian land in the 1920s by Western scientists and corporations with and ongoing struggles regarding land rights today. BENJAMIN STEEGEN (University of Leuven) study on the role of a „Belgian Gandhi“ in questionable village reconstruction schemes in twentieth century India also served as a case study of an attempted transfer of Northern expertise in-

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to a Southern context. Meanwhile, NICHOLAS FERNS (Monash University) explored how the creation of UNCTAD and the Australian project of a „Middle Zone“ emerged as direct response to the intensifying North-South dichotomy in the 1970s. While such schemes proved unsuccessful and, to some extent, dubious, other papers showed how specific projects could have ambivalent outcomes and evaded a clear-cut North-South divide or simple interpretation. When analyzing the activities of an Indonesian church organization affiliated with the World Council of Churches, NOEMI RUI (University of Berne) found that results depended largely on the attitudes of local dignitaries. Maps used for village development schemes in post-colonial India, shown by Jack Loveridge, (Yale International Security Studies) reminded some conference participants of imperialist resettlement schemes during the Algerian or Vietnam wars, others of more innocent efforts of the twentieth century garden city movement or earlier Thünen models of resource-based village planning. The work in progress presented by YI-TANG LIN, co-authored with DAVIDE RODOGNO and THOMAS DAVID (Graduate Institute, Geneva) regarding a full database of the fellowships awarded by the Rockefeller Foundation promised further nuanced findings regarding the dynamics of attempted North-South knowledge transfer.

Papers pertaining to the Cold War tied a North-South to an East-West dimension. In his keynote lecture DAVID ENGERMAN (Brandeis University, Boston) demonstrated how US-Soviet competition about determining the developmental direction of India during the 1950s had tangible repercussions for decisions taken by the Indian government, both broadening and limiting its room of maneuver. Other papers added China to the Cold War picture: ANDREAS HILGER (University of Heidelberg) showed how Soviet-Indian relations between the 1940s and 1960s were complicated not only by contrasting needs and visions in those two countries but also by the growing Sino-Soviet rift. Using an only moderately successful brick factory as a case study, JARED WARD (University of Akron) explained how the People's Republic of China (PRC) used modernization and develop-

ment in Guyana in the 1970s as part of a broader strategy to form a united front of former colonies and to prevent the expansion of US influence as well as Soviet-American collusion. FEDERICO PACCHETTI's (Shanghai University) paper argued that the USA and the PRC made use of a developmental logic in order to establish relations in the late 1970s. Irrespective of the countries and other circumstances concerned, all these studies suggested that political considerations dominated developmental rationales, though sometimes the two could be intertwined so as to be impossible to keep apart.

To varying degrees, these aspects also appeared in a cluster of papers addressing various programs of international organizations, notably within the UN group, demonstrating both their importance as agents in the global development field and the broad spectrum of their activities. Thus, MARIE HUBER (Humboldt University of Berlin) explored the role of the first UN Development (1960-1970) in promoting international tourism in low-income countries in the Global South. Resulting processes selectively turned cultural and natural heritage into an economic resource according to the interest to Western tourists with varying advantages to local power elites, national economies and heritage conservation. Results vacillated between benefit and exploitation. Similarly, FRANK BEYERSDORF (Humboldt Universität of Berlin) explained how UNESCO's Mass Media Projects in Southern States during the late 1940s tended to exacerbate existing social inequalities by following an Anglo-Saxon concept of a liberalized international information market. By contrast, ANGELA VILLANI (University of Messina) showed how the successful efforts of postwar UNICEF to reconceptualise child welfare as investments in development tangibly benefitted children, while Sabrina Regmi (University of Basel) saw ambivalent effects for women in UNDP supported programs of microenterprise development in rural Nepal.

Several papers formed sub-clusters regarding specific issues that went beyond international organizations. Thus, the papers of MARTIN GORSKY and CHRISTOPHER SIRRS (both Centre for History in Public Health, London), John Manton (London

School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) and DOINA ANCA CRETU (Graduate Institute, Geneva) all addressed various policies of the World Health Organization and the Rockefeller Foundation to integrate health concerns into (inter-)national development agendas. Other case studies of the use of health as a means of modernization, albeit with shifting meanings, were presented by ENYI HU (School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Hong Kong) with respect to female staff of Yenching College in early twentieth century China and DAVID REUBI (King's College, London) regarding smoking and the reconfiguration of health and development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Collectively, they demonstrated the perceived importance of a healthy population in all development schemes.

The environment formed another such cluster topic, with IRIS BOROWY and JINGHUA QIAO/ZHANG YONG-AN (all Shanghai University) presenting studies on the environmental programs of the OECD and NATO, both of which are organizations not primarily associated with environmental issues. Thus, their papers served not only to reveal an often overlooked facet of these organizations but also the extent to which environmental questions have formed an integral component of the development programs of otherwise very different specialized agencies. This point was further demonstrated by CRISTINA BLANCO SÍO-LÓPEZ' (European University Institute, Florence) analysis of the interregional dialogue regarding sustainable development agendas within the European Union and SIMONE SCHLEPER's (Maastricht University) study on the background and early life of the World Conservation Strategy 1975-85. Though differing in focus and approach, all these studies showed how international organizations have long been aware of the environmental challenges created by ongoing developmental practices and have struggled to find strategies to reconcile the potentially contradictory demands of long-term, sustainable forms of widely coveted economic development while, at the same time, maintaining or strengthening their respective institutional identities.

Like health, the environment formed an is-

sue beyond international organizations. AARON MORALINA (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa) reviewed shifting attitudes regarding US-sponsored insecticide spraying in postcolonial Philippines. EDWARD SHORE (University of Texas-Austin) and XIAOHUI LIU (Shanghai Normal University) focused on environmental implications of specific groups: the descendants of fugitive slaves, whose settlements in São Paulo's Atlantic Rainforest formed an alternative model to the existing mainstream development paradigm but largely disappeared along with the forest on which it depended; and the Chinese immigrants' in late nineteenth century California, who transformed the local landscape through culturally grounded agricultural and fishing activities.

In addition, a few papers stood out as not being easily conceptualized along conventional categories. In a fascinating comparison, ALEXANDRA JONES (Independent scholar, USA) teased out similarities of two of the bloodiest episodes in the nineteenth century: the Civil War in the USA and the Taiping Rebellion in China. In both cases, the rebels saw themselves as saviors of culture and ethnic purity, both looked to the past as a model for the future, and both came close to but ultimately failed to change the ongoing course of mainstream development. The synchrony of these events raised the question whether they represented two separate movements serendipitously occurring at the same time or whether they indicated some underlying fault line in global development worth pursuing further. Using a completely different approach, NIC LEONHARDT, in a paper co-authored with CHRISTOPHER BALME (both LMU Munich) presented pioneering data regarding the use of theatre as international development cooperation by Western as well as Communist countries, an area in which research has only just begun.

A palpable though often unspoken elements of the discussions concerned the degree to which history, present and future have been intertwined and to which history writing – perhaps inevitably – have been connected to activism. This point was made explicit by GREGG MITMAN whose film largely focused on the reactions of present-day Liberians

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to the footage of their ancestors and their interaction with US scientists and corporations. It also showed how raising awareness of this background has had a direct impact on negotiations regarding land rights in contemporary Liberia. ALBERT SANGHOON PARK'S (University of Cambridge) analysis of the historiography of development studies showed the opposite trajectory: most books on development had been written with the express purpose of criticizing and changing developmental policies, sometimes by former practitioners in international development programs. Accordingly, many shared a common negative bias which, in turn, influenced the mainstream narrative of the history of development. Indirectly, GABRIEL GARCÍA (University of Wollongong) highlighted the degree to which past questions of development interactions continue today. His paper on possible lessons of the recent Chinese development for Latin America demonstrated that issues regarding the transfer of concepts, practices and paradigms from one part of the world to the other are as relevant today as they were a century ago.

Overall, participants agreed that it had been an extremely useful conference, uniting people from various geographical and institutional places, who frequently found that they shared interests and topics even though they had had no knowledge of one another before. There was also a widespread feeling that this type of meeting was overdue and should be repeated.

### **Conference Overview:**

#### *Keynote Address and Film*

Gregg Mitman (Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, Munich / University of Wisconsin-Madison): The Land Beneath our Feet. Land Rights in Liberia

Chair: Iris Borowy

Keynote Address: Alexander Nützenadel (Humboldt University of Berlin): Global Economic Inequality and Development in Historical Perspective. A Critical Appraisal of Recent Debates

Chair: Changgang Guo

#### *Developmental Concepts*

Chair: Davide Rodogno

Albert Sanghoon Park (University of Cambridge): The idea of development: A critical historiographical review

Gabriel Garcia (University of Wollongong): Beijing's Developmental Model: Lessons for Latin American

Noëmi Rui (University of Berne): The challenge of a global concept for local activism – the development concepts of the DGI

#### *Late 19th Century / early 20th century*

Chair: Wei Huang (Xuehai Hall)

Enyi HU (School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Hong Kong): Changing China through Hygiene Knowledge: Yenching Faculty Members and the Intellectual Gospel

Norbert Götz (Södertörn University, Stockholm): Development vs. Entitlement: The Moral Economy of Ireland's Modernisation through Famine, 1845–1852

Alexandra Jones (Independent scholar, USA): The Southern Rebels of the Nineteenth Century and Their Developmental Push, which Ripples Through to Today.

#### *Knowledge – Education – Culture*

Chair: Dobrosława Wiktor-Mach (Shangshan Hall)

Marie Huber (Humboldt University of Berlin): Creating Destinations for a Better Tomorrow: International Technical Assistance to National Tourism Sectors in Developing Countries During the First UN Development Decade (1960-1970)

Nic Leonhardt (LMU Munich): Developing Theatre: Building Expert Networks for Theatre in Emerging Countries after 1945

Frank Beyersdorf (Humboldt Universität of Berlin): Colonialism in a New Guise? UNESCO's Mass Media Projects and the States of the South, 1945-1950

#### *Cold War*

Chair: David Engerman (Xuehai Hall)

Andreas Hilger (University of Heidelberg): Competing visions, entangled histories – Indo-Soviet economic relations in the contexts

of Cold War and Decolonization, 1940s-1960s

Jared Ward (University of Akron): PRC and Guyana 1972

Federico Pachetti (Shanghai University): The Beginning of A New Era: U.S.-China Relations in the Aftermath of Normalization

*International Organizations I*

Chair: Hao Chen (Shangshan Hall)

Davide Rodogno / Yi-tang Lin/Thomas David (Graduate Institute, Geneva): Database on Rockefeller Foundation fellows

Iris Borowy (Shanghai University): Waste Management Studies at the OECD

Zhang Yong-an (Shanghai University): CCMS and air pollution

*Applying theory to local circumstances*

Chair: Gabriel Garcia

Stephen Macekura (Indiana University, Bloomington): The Rhodesian Anxiety: Accounting for International Development in the 1940s

Harald Fischer-Tiné (ETH Zurich): „The Knowledge of the more abundant life“: The Making of early US Development Expertise in South Asia (1924 – 1952)

Salvador Marinero (CEIL-CONICET/Shanghai University): The struggle for a concept: meanings and expectations of the term development in Argentina during 1958 and 1962

*Health*

Chair: Gregg Mitman (Shangshan Hall)

David Reubi (King's College, London): Problematizing Smoking in Sub-Saharan Africa: Tobacco and the Reconfiguration of Health and Development

Martin Gorsky / Christopher Sirrs (Centre for History in Public Health, London): From 'Planning' to 'Systems Analysis': Health Services and Development at the World Health Organization, c.1960-1975

John Manton (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine): Conceiving the health system in extremis: the WHO and emergency administration of health services in Laos and

Cambodia, 1968-75.

*Keynote Address*

David Engerman (Brandeis University, Boston): Development and the Global Cold War  
Chair: Yong-an Zhang

*Community Development / Rural Development*

Chair: Rajiv Ranjan

Benjamin Steegen (University of Leuven): The Belgian Gandhi and Rural Development in India: The Village Reconstruction Organization

Jack Loveridge (Yale International Security Studies): The Romance of Refashioning People: Pursuing Rural Development in the Era of South Asian Decolonization

Sabrina Regmi (University of Basel): Gender and Politics of Microenterprise Development in Rural Nepal

*Sustainability*

Chair: Stephen Macekura (Shangshan Hall)

Edward Shore (The University of Texas-Austin): „The Descendants of Fugitive Slaves and the Struggle for Sustainable Development in São Paulo's Atlantic Rainforest“

Simone Schleper (Maastricht University): Nature's Value in Sustainable Development. The Faultlines Behind the World Conservation Strategy, 1975-85

Cristina Blanco Sío López (European University Institute, Florence): From Imbalance to Interdependence? Selective Adaptation and Interregional Dialogue in the Evolving EU Development and Sustainability Agendas

*International Organizations II*

Chair: Tugrul Keskin (Siyuan Hall)

Angela Villani (University of Messina): Children in the development debate: the role of Unicef in Europe and the case of Italy from post-WW2 to the early Seventies

Doina Anca Cretu (Graduate Institute, Geneva): The Rockefeller Foundation and Early Sites of Community Development: The Case of Model Health Districts in Interwar Romania

Nicholas Ferns (Monash University): „Developed, Developing or Midway?“ UNCTAD

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and the Australian Response

*Environmental Concerns*

Chair: Iris Borowy

Aaron Rom O. Moralina (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa): Spraying Under the Mango Tree: Insecticides, Postcolonial Development, and U.S.-Philippines Relations after the Second World War

Xiaohui Liu (Shanghai Normal University): The Ecological Footprint of Chinese Immigrants in California, 1860s – 1890s

Tagungsbericht *How to Change the World*. 26.05.2017–28.05.2017, Shanghai, in: H-Soz-Kult 28.06.2017.