

**Fighting Drink, Drugs, and Venereal Diseases: Global Anti-Vice Activism, ca. 1870-1940**

**Veranstalter:** Harald Fischer-Tiné / Jana Tschurenév, History of the Modern World, ETH Zurich

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**Bericht von:** Judith Große, History of the Modern World, ETH Zurich

From the mid-19th century onwards a growing number of non-governmental organizations, intellectuals and policy-makers became concerned with ‘vices’ that appeared to pose a vital threat to national populations and even humanity at large, namely alcoholism, drug abuse as well as prostitution and deviant sexual behaviours, which were perceived to be the main sources of venereal diseases (VD). In an attempt to draw connections between the multitude of local campaigns against ‘vices’ in a global perspective, the conference ‘Fighting Drink, Drugs, and Venereal Diseases: Global Anti-Vice Activism, ca. 1870-1940’ organised by Harald Fischer-Tiné and Jana Tschurenév (History of the Modern World, ETH Zurich), hosted about 50 international scholars. It was held from April 1st to 4th 2012 at Monte Verità/Ascona, Switzerland, a site which – as a centre of the life-reform movement around 1900 – had particular resonance for the conference topic.

Starting from the basic question why the fight against ‘vices’ mobilised people around the globe, the conference sought to reconstruct the plurality of actors and networks involved in these campaigns and explore their ideologies and epistemologies. It set out to investigate how various notions of ‘vice’ emerged, changed, and intermingled, in what ways different ‘vices’ became to be seen as connected to each other and how anti-vice crusades were linked to other social and political objectives.

In her introduction, JANA TSCHURENEV (Zurich) suggested looking at such transnational non-governmental activities as the historical roots of a ‘global civil society’ against the background of internationalism and imperialism as intersecting forces of globaliza-

tion. Another important theoretical framework was the Foucauldian concept of biopolitics, which would allow grasping ‘vices’ in medical terms as well as understanding the making of new regulatory regimes. The framing of humans as evolved biological beings within the human sciences enabled the emergence of a new form of political power, which was aimed at the regulation of the human body and life in its totality. One important manifestation were eugenic concerns for the bettering of national populations or ‘races’, promoted by governments as well as anti-vice movements.

In the opening key note DOMINIC SACHSENMAIER (Bremen) addressed the tension between a growing economic and political integration of the globe (ca. 1840s to 1940s) and the strengthening of governmental apparatuses as the backdrop of anti-vice activism in this era. Not only did the increased intensity of global migration lead to new types of border-control, it also went hand in hand with the establishment of new regulatory regimes of the population within territorial borders, as immigrants were often perceived as prone to vices and therefore had to be monitored and kept apart from the rest of society.

EMMANUEL AKYEAMPONG’s (Harvard) keynote explored how efforts to control/contain alcohol and VD in British West Africa (1839-1948) were shaped in an arena of conflicting interests: The government policed ‘vices’ only when they seemed to threaten colonial rule, partly relying on an alliance with local chiefs who sought to save their privileged access to liquor and sexual services. Still the chiefs and the young working-class were united in their resistance to the colonial government’s definitions of alcohol and prostitution as deviant behaviour, a meaning with no relevance in popular culture.

The following panel session was devoted to changing knowledge frameworks and took up the question of competing concepts of ‘vices’ in the early 20th century. CHARLES AMBLER (El Paso) analyzed public debates on the harmful effects of alcohol on the native population in British West Africa. In contrast to the colonial government, who refrained from prohibition in order to protect their most

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important source of revenue, it was the anti-alcohol activists who created a sense of threat. Using the language of scientific racism and eugenics, they now warned of racial degeneration rather than of moral decay, striving in vain to provide scientific evidence for the degenerative effects of alcohol.

ANTHONY TAYLOR (Sheffield) explored the perception of alternative communities, 'septic edens' such as the Monte Verità, by the state and mainstream society. Linking the moral depravity of the communards in terms of promiscuity or narcotics abuse to political depravity in regard to their radical political agenda, public opinion grew intensely hostile leading to surveillance from both states and anti-vice activists. CAREY WATT (Fredericton) introduced the body builder Eugen Sandow as a global entrepreneur, who was improving 'racial health' by selling his particular method of physical culture. Though sceptical *vis-a-vis* the solutions of contemporary anti-vice activists, Sandow shared their critique of modern, industrial lifestyle including the use of pharmaceuticals and propagated his work-out as 'natural cure' to the diseases of civilization.

In his evening lecture HELMUT ZANDER (Fribourg) examined alternative religious practices as part of the central-European life reform movement around 1900, arguing that the intended individualisation of religion led to hybrid constructions of convictions and multiple memberships. This tendency was furthermore depicted by Zander as the reason why 'reformist' religious attitudes and practices were highly ambiguous: sexuality, for instance, could either be condemned as 'vice', marking the degeneration of modern (Western) civilization or embraced as a spiritual practice which would be a cure for the diseases of civilization within these movements.

In a similar line of argument, PHILIPPA LEVINE's (Austin) keynote on Tuesday tackled the question of ambiguities in reform movements by taking the example of nakedness in relation to perceptions of modernity. In contrast to the social vigilance movement's campaigns against nude art in England, which scandalised nakedness as an outgrowth of over-civilised society, nudism got disentangled from sexuality and perceived as

a liberating practice in radical reformist circles. As a manifestation of health and being in touch with nature, nakedness was a form of critique of modernity – i.e. the urban industrial lifestyle – which in itself was depicted by Levine as specifically modernist. Drawing on the figure of the noble savage in avant-garde art, she also revealed the underlying racism of the modernist critique of Western civilisation.

The following panel session was devoted to the regulation of sexuality. ROBERT KRAMM's (Tübingen) micro-historic analysis of regulative measures for military personnel in US-occupied Japan revealed not only the normalisation of sexuality along racial boundaries, but also the appropriation of non-imported Japanese hygienic artefacts. JESSICA PLILEY (San Marcos, TX) focused on the role of the FBI's White Slave Division (1910-1917) in the policing and monitoring of foreign-born prostitutes. She argued that this operation laid the foundation for the FBI's organisational structure and its expansion as a truly national institution. Her paper also showed how some of the policies developed in occupied Japan and colonial sites were used in the USA itself.

STEPHEN LEGG (Nottingham) offered some methodological insights by discussing the heuristic value of the geographical concept of scales for his analysis of the regulation of prostitution in late-colonial Delhi. Defining scales as real and powerful entities, a scalar model of space allowed him to grasp the entanglements of local, national, imperial and international regulation policies of brothels, thus enabling a micro-history of the British Empire and international politics. NAYAN SHAH (San Diego) took up the issue raised by Sachsenmaier, and examined the critical role of Asian transnational migration and racialization for the regulation of narcotics, especially opium, and sexual relations in the port city of Vancouver, conceptualising it as both a local and transnational regime of regulation. He described how the bio-political vision of a healthy white society led to a criminalization of the mostly male migrant workers' sociability and suggested to explore their counter-strategies.

The afternoon session on politics of drug and alcohol regulation was opened by GER-

NOT KLANTSCHNIG (Ningbo). Criticising the lack of historical depth as well as the persistence of diffusionist models in contemporary drug research, he retraced the local origins of cannabis-regulation in Nigeria from the reluctance of the colonial government to implement any measures to the introduction of a repressive drug policy in the 1960s by the new military government. MARCOS FERNANDEZ-LABBÉ (Santiago de Chile) grappled with the emergence of anti-drug and alcohol policies in Chile. He demonstrated how a nationalist eugenicist discourse and a medicalised understanding of drug use triggered by professional physicians became entangled with an understanding of drug and alcohol abuse as political deviance. Lastly ADRIAN ZANDBERG (Warsaw) shed light on the so far sparsely investigated temperance movement in catholic Poland in the era of independence after World War I, arguing that their remarkable success was due to a strong collaboration with the international temperance movement.

The last keynote lecture by DAVID COURTWRIGHT (North Florida) offered a bird's-eyes perspective on the emergence of global anti-vice activism in the 19th century, exploring its socio-economic conditions, discursive currents and political effects. He brought to mind its rational foundation by underlining how 'vices' like alcohol/drug abuse and prostitution became more commercialized and burdensome due to the global trade in an age of empires, industrialisation and mass consumption. He described how the activists achieved a decommodification and often criminalisation of the, until then, legal and taxed products by drawing heavily on the real-life problems and social costs of drugs and VD but also by associating them with sinful conduct, deviant behaviour and increasingly with medical concerns.

In the last panel THOMAS FISCHER (Eichstätt) using the example of coca analysed how the international discourse on drug prohibition in the early 20th century was transferred and negotiated in the coca-producing Andean states, reading it as a manifestation of post-colonial conflicts between primary producers in the periphery and processing industry in the center. MARK SCHRAD (Villanova)

picked up the question of networks by explaining his methods to grasp and visualise the transnational networks of temperance-activists – distancing himself from oversimplifying and geographically narrow concepts in the political sciences. DIEGO ARMUS (Swarthmore) concluded the session with analysis of a more contemporary form of drug prohibition: the adaption of the WHO's anti-smoking policy by Argentina in 2011 was depicted by Armus as a disruption of a century-old tradition and a celebrating discourse of smoking as an icon of Buenos Aires life-style in the late 19th and 20th century. He reminded the audience of the importance of diligently proving the size and networks of anti-vice groups for a realistic estimation of their actual influence on politics and people's habits.

The concluding round table discussion took up central questions discussed at the conference, such as the theoretical frameworks to understand anti-vice activism suggested by the conveners. The overall observable tendency towards Foucauldian concepts of social discipline in contrast to a more optimistic notion of a global civil society was confirmed in the final debate. Several discussants stressed the aspects of discipline, control and violence enforced by anti-vice movements in collaboration with governmental agents, often along the boundaries of race, class and gender. Still some contributors pointed out the importance of also exploring the agency and practices of resistance of those groups policed by anti-vice movements. This led to the much debated request to draw more attention to the actual effects of anti-vice activism in terms of political implementation on the national and international level but also in terms of impact on people's behaviour in day-to-day life.

Foucauldian ideas of self-policing and biopolitics seemed also to have been guiding the discussions on shifting notions of 'vices'. Still a clear-cut model of succession from a religious concept of sin to a secular, medicalised understanding as well as from individual to social responsibility in handling deviant behaviour was challenged by many contributors.

The organizers declared aim was to bring together research on different 'vices' as well as different localities in order to search for

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global connections between local campaigns and regulation policies and to make informed comparisons. While the synergy effects were higher in some panels than in others, it seems that the organisers' goal worked out overall – one indicator was that it closed with a vivid discussion on how to write global history. While it was agreed that the writing of an *histoire totale* of these movements was neither necessary nor possible; the alternative options ranked from focusing on the connections and circulation between movements to digging into the local and specific. Regarding the scales of analysis, the necessity of preventing a backdrop in national frameworks was repeatedly stressed.

### Conference Overview:

#### *Welcome and Introduction*

Harald Fischer-Tiné (ETH Zürich), Jana Tschurennev (ETH Zürich)

#### *Opening Lecture*

Dominic Sachsenmaier (Jacobs University Bremen): Societies and Borders. Some Global Historical Perspectives of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries

#### *Keynote*

Emmanuel Akyeampong (Harvard University): Threats to Empire: Illicit Distillation, Venereal Diseases and Colonial Disorder in British West Africa, 1930-1948

#### *Panel 1: Discourses of Degeneration, Danger, and Disease*

Charles Ambler (University of Texas at El Paso): The Specter of Degeneration: Alcohol and Race in West Africa in the early Twentieth Century

Antony Taylor (Sheffield Hallam University): 'Septic Edens': Surveillance, Eroticised Anarchy and Europe's Depraved Communities, 1890-1939

Carey A. Watt (St. Thomas University, Fredericton, NB, Canada): Physical Culture as 'Natural Cure': Eugen Sandow's Global Campaign Against the Diseases of Civilization c. 1900-1910

Chair: Harald Fischer-Tiné (ETH Zürich)

#### *Panel 2: Anti-Vice Activism between Religion, Science, and Morality*

Martin Lengwiler (Universität Basel): Interna-

tional psychiatric debates on 'alcoholism' and venereal diseases (1870-1940)

Meta Remec (Institute of Contemporary History, Ljubljana): Sexual Diseases between Science and Morality. Struggle against sexual diseases among Slovene authors and their Italian counterparts in the bourgeois era  
Francesco Spöring (ETH Zürich): Representing global knowledge for global policies? The International Bureau against Alcoholism's Anti-alcohol Advocacy at the League of Nations

Chair: Urs Lindner (ETH Zürich)

#### *Panel 3: Anti-Alcohol Campaigns and National Mobilization (Part I)*

Stephanie Olsen (Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Centre for the History of Emotions, Berlin): Teaching Piety and Temperance to Boys in British Bands of Hope, 1880-1914

Justyna Aniceta Turkowska (Herder Institut, Marburg): The same direction, different ways – the anti-alcohol popularization in the Prussia Province of Posen

Sönke Pascal Bauck (ETH Zürich): Envisioning a South American Temperance League: The WCTU's Role in the River Plate Area (1915-1940)

Chair: Hasso Spode (Freie Universität Berlin / Leibniz Universität Hannover)

#### *Panel 4: Anti-Alcohol Campaigns and National Mobilization (Part II)*

Björn M. Felder (Universität Göttingen): Fighting the destruction of the nation. Campaigns and debates against alcohol and venereal diseases between proto-eugenics and national palingenesis in Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union and the Baltic States 1880-1940

Nikolay Kamenov (ETH Zürich): A question of social medicine or racial hygiene? The temperance discourse in Bulgaria, 1920-40

Andrej Studen (Institute of Contemporary History, Ljubljana): Alcoholism a Threat to the Survival of a Nation. The fight against alcoholism in Slovenia in the bourgeois era  
Chair: Mark Schrad (Villanova University)

#### *Panel 5: Social Hygiene, Science, and Bio-Politics*

Stefan Rinke (Freie Universität Berlin): Mucking out the Augean Stables: The Beginnings of Sanitary Reform in Chile in the Early 20th

Century

Corinne Pernet (Universität St Gallen): The Limits of Global Biopolitics: The Question of Alcoholism and Workers' Leisure at the League of Nations

Luzia Savary (ETH Zürich): The Indian Elites' Eugenic Concerns: „Struggle for Existence“ and „Racial Improvement“ in the Vernacular Printing Press in Colonial India (ca. 1900-1940)

Chair: Urs Lindner (ETH Zürich)

*Evening Lecture*

Helmut Zander (Universität de Fribourg): Religiosity after Religion. Vices, the „Lebensreform“ and the Acculturation of Religion in the 20th Century

*Keynote*

Philippa Levine (University of Austin, Texas): Nakedness and the Problem of Modernity

*Panel 6: Nation, Empire and the Regulation of Sexuality*

Robert Kramm-Masaoka (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen): Sanitized Sex: Regulating Venereal Diseases and Intimacy in early U.S. Occupied Japan

Jessica R. Pliley (Texas State University, San Marcos): The FBI's White Slave Division: The Creation of a National Regulatory Regime to Police Prostitutes in the United States, 1910-1917

Stephen Legg (University of Nottingham): Trans-scalar regulations of prostitution: Delhi, India, Empire, League

Nayan Shah (University of California, San Diego): Transnational Migration, Racialization and Regulating Narcotics and Sex: Vancouver at the Global Crossroads

Chair: Harald Fischer-Tiné (ETH Zürich)

*Panel 7: National and Regional Anti-Drug Campaigns*

Annika Hoffmann (Institut für Geschichte der Medizin der Robert Bosch Stiftung): The problematization of drug use in 1920s Germany: a question of morality

Pavel Vasilyev (St. Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences): Medical and Criminological Constructions of Drug Addiction in late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia

Chair: Martin Lengwiler (Universität Basel)

*Panel 8: The Politics of Anti-Trafficking in Europe*

Juergen Nautz (Universität Wien): „Our Sisters on the Streets.“ Gender Roles and Moral Standards of the Anti-Trafficking Alliance in Old Austria

Jean Michel Chaumont (Université de Louvain): Beyond Sovereignty? How France resisted the League of Nations' lobby against the regulation of prostitution (The case of the International Inquiry on Trafficking in Women and Children, 1924-1927)

Edith Siegenthaler (Universität Bern): From Individual Moral to Societal Responsibility? The Reception of the League of Nations' Discourse about Human Trafficking in the Swiss National Committee against Trafficking in Girls

Chair: Corinne Pernet (Universität St. Gallen)

*Panel 9: Colonial and National Politics of Drug and Alcohol Regulation*

Gernot Klantschning (University of Nottingham in Ningbo, China): Making Nigeria's first drug problem: the colonial state, doctors and soldiers on Indian hemp, c.1900-1967

Marcos Fernandez Labbe (Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Santiago de Chile): Regulated Vices: policies against alcohol and drug abuse in Chile, 1900-1940

Adrian Zandberg (School of Political Science, Communication and International Relations, Warsaw): 'Free and Dry'. Prohibitionists and the making of alcohol policy in the interwar Poland

Chair: Thomas Fischer (Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt)

*Panel 10: Internationalism and Anti-Vice Agendas: The League of Nations*

Philippe Bourmaud (Université Jean Moulin, Lyon): Unspeakable vices. The League of Nations and the prohibition of obscene publications (1919-1939)

Maria Framke (HU Berlin): The Opium Question in India: Indian nationalist and official government responses to the drug control initiatives of the League of Nations

Christine Whyte (ETH Zürich): A maker of modern rights: the life and interests of Lord Lugard, from colonial foot-soldier to international campaigner

Chair: Jana Tschurenne (ETH Zürich)

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*Keynote*

David Courtwright (University of North Florida): The Origins and Politics of Global Anti-Vice Activism, ca. 1870-1940

*Panel 11: Global Campaigns, Transnational Networks, International Regimes*

Thomas Fischer (Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt): The Beginnings of Drug Prohibition

Mark Schrad (Villanova University): Mega-Networks in Early Transnational Activism

Diego Armus (Swarthmore College): Cigarette Smoking in Modern Buenos Aires. The sudden change in a century-old continuity

Chair: Jana Tschurenev

*Round Table Discussion with*

David Courtwright, Stephen Legg, Philippa Levine, Jana Tschurenev and Hasso Spode

Chair: Harald Fischer-Tiné

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