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FRISCH

Globalisierungsstudien
und europäische
Geschichte

BOOK LAUNCH

Global Civilisers?

A critical look on the WHO and the history of international organizations

25 April 2017, 6:00 p. m.

Centre for Area Studies • Thomaskirchhof 20 • 04109 Leipzig

In our present world international organizations are often confronted with contradictory perceptions. Either they are seen as powerful managers of what is described as “globalization”. Or, they appear as paper tigers, not being capable of resisting almighty economic actors and their projects, and to defend rights and resources of the less powerful players. Or, they are accused of being mere instruments of hegemonic – often western – nation states, thus not at all as representatives of “global governance” but rather of “empire”. These discussions and contradictions are rooted deeply in the histories of 19th century empires, of 20th century decolonization, of the Cold War and they have been fueled through more recent debates about the reform of the UN system and the emergence and failure of “global governance”.

Hence, it is both of academic and of political importance to more thoroughly investigate their histories and trajectories and to inquire into questions such as: Where do the values and norms

international organisations aim to promote and enforce come from? Which effects did decolonization and the emergence of many new nation states in the course of the 20th century have

for the role which international organizations play in a global world? Which kind of people work in international organizations and how do they shape their activities?

It is this kind of questions Klaas Dykmann addresses in his recent book, which demonstrates on the one hand, how the emergence of international organizations in the 19th century was deeply intertwined with the history of western empires and their civilizing missions. On the other hand, he argues, decolonization opened new spaces of action for formerly subjected people(s) which co-produced the normative order of international organizations. With a particular view on one of the big players in the arena – the World Health Organization – he investigates institutional trajectories as well as individual biographies of the people working in and shaping the outlook of the organization. The “civilizing mission” of the WHO has dramatically shaped many lives across the globe since the beginnings of its existence and it has received particular attention and criticism not only in the most recent Ebola or HIV crises in Africa or with regard to global vaccination or breast feeding campaigns. Klaas Dykman can offer us an insight into the mechanisms inside the organization, helping us to better understand how the universal norms emerge which shape many individual fates.



Klaas Dykmann:
**Internationale Organisationen und ihre Zivilisierungsbestrebungen.
Die Geschichte der Weltgesundheitsorganisation.**
Berlin et al.: Lit, 2017.



The author

Dr. Klaas Dykmann is historian and political scientist specialising in international organisations, inter-American and European foreign relations, global human rights and the international civil service. Since 2010 he is Associate

Professor for Global Studies at Roskilde University in Denmark, and since October 2016 Visiting Researcher at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. As a fellow of the German Academic Exchange Service and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation he was awarded his Ph.D. at the University of Hamburg in 2003. He taught and researched in the Americas, Europe, India, South Africa, and Australia. Between 2003 and 2005 he was a Thyssen fellow at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies in Hamburg and between 2006 and 2010 he worked at the Global and European Studies Institute at the University of Leipzig.



The discussant

Dr. Katja Naumann is historian specialising in the history of international organisations, the history of world history writing and of transnational entanglements of and in East Central Europe. Since 2008 she is senior researcher at the Leibniz Institute

for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) in Leipzig and teaches global history at the Global and European Studies Institute of Leipzig University. She is editor for the electronic journal CONNECTIONS. A journal for historians and area specialists and editorial assistant for COMPARATIV. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und Vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung as well as chairperson of the European Network in Universal and Global History

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VENUE

Centre for Area Studies
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The Centre for Area Studies is a 10–15 minute walk from the Leipzig Main Station (Hauptbahnhof) towards the west part of the city centre across from Thomaskirche, or take public transport (bus 89, tram 9, stop “Thomaskirche”).

Please find further directions at:
<http://cas.sozphil.uni-leipzig.de/welcome/directions>



This event is organized by the European Network in Universal and Global History, in cooperation with the Centre for Area Studies of the University of Leipzig and the SFB 1199.

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