

Call for papers:

De-centering the history of international and transnational organisations:

Archives, methods and new perspectives

Workshop: 29 November – 1 December 2023 in Leuven, Belgium

International and transnational organisations have been prominent actors in histories of the long 20th century, histories often marked by methodological innovations, which have generated new insights and reframed our understanding of, for instance, the Cold War, global civil society, and decolonisation. However, there has been little reflection on how historians can apply those same methodological perspectives to the use of these organisation's archives. This workshop seeks to explore how different methodological approaches to international and transnational organisations can bring new histories into view. Rather than approaching international and transnational organisations from a strictly institutional point of view, we, instead, wonder how these organisations and their archives can become the basis for telling other, local, regional or international, stories that shift the focus to the broader context in which these organisations operated. By going beyond the institutional histories the workshop probes to re-evaluate the historiographical position of these organisations, while maintaining a clear view of the historian's placement, challenges and limits.

In order to discuss such “de-centering” of the history of international and transnational organisations, this workshop focusses on methodological and epistemological reflections, and aims to bring together scholars working on all different strands of internationalism – from intergovernmental to non-governmental and civil society organisations, from religious internationals to trade union confederations and financial institutions. We welcome contributions that are based on a critical evaluation of experiences in the field, particularly in archives, that highlight how researchers have considered the methodological implications of de-centring their examination of these international organisations.

Some of the questions that might prompt contributions include:

- How can the de-centering of international and transnational organisations and their archives engender new insights on a broad range of historical topics?
- How has the recent emphasis in transnational history on disconnections informed methods and project design? What has the concept of disconnections brought to the previous emphasis on connections and flows? How have we managed the relationship between connections and disconnections?

- The spatialization of transnational history: how can we write an international history from the local level? Conversely, how can we narrate local history by making use of international sources?
- What new international organisations or networks are brought into view when our starting point is local contexts? How are understandings of what is an international organisation challenged by recent developments in the field?
- Archiving and archival practices reflect certain internal visions and understandings of the international organisation, shaping the sources with which we can tell stories.
- How can we challenge and supplement these understandings through alternative source collections or archival projects, and what are the methodological implications of doing so?
- What are the promises and perils of newer materials such as born-digital materials and what insights do they offer for understanding current forms of international organisation?

Please submit a max. 350-word proposal by 4 July 2023, via this webpage:

https://kadoc.kuleuven.be/english/3_research/31_ourresearch/workshops/2023/ws_international_organisations

Participants will be asked to submit a max. 4 page paper by 14 November, 2023. This paper should be a substantial outline of what a future full paper arising from your presentation will (or is envisaged to) look like. These will complement the 12-15 min oral presentations given during the workshop. They will also serve the basis for future collaborations, be it an edited collection/journal special editions or a collective research network grant. A particular aim of the workshop is to generate one or more ongoing collaborative projects, and time will be devoted to exploring these options.

A limited budget for accommodation and travel expenses has been made available to support scholars with little or no funding. **Further questions may be directed to the organising committee:** Michelle Carmody (Michelle.carmody@kuleuven.be), Sam Kuijken (Sam.kuijken@kuleuven.be) and Manuel Herrera Crespo (Manuel.herreracrespo@kuleuven.be).