CALL FOR PAPERS – WORKSHOP, UNIVERSITY OF BERN, SWITZERLAND

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Imaginaries of Development in the Highlands

The constitution of mountain areas as spaces for international development cooperation since 1945

In the course of the institutionalization and regulation of international development policies after World War II, development planners – mostly from North-America and Europe – analyzed vast regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America with regard to their levels of development. By identifying and evaluating ostensible obstacles and potentials for social and economic progress in non-industrialized countries, those actors defined particular *spaces for development* that reflected geopolitical, demographic and geographic frames of interpretation.

Accordingly, the portrayal of places and people who should benefit from international development projects in the fields of infrastructure, education, or health care, for instance, were shaped by colonialist thinking that tended to ignore local political, social and cultural contexts. At the same time, this kind of mapping of the so-called Third World established specific knowledge and concrete ideas of the 'underdeveloped' world within European and North American societies. But notwithstanding this Eurocentric development approach, the planning, and most of all, the implementation of the projects depended on the exchange and collaboration with regional and local actors, that also pursued their own interests.

The workshop "Imaginaries of Development in the Highlands: The constitution of mountain areas as spaces for international development cooperation since 1945" focuses on international development cooperation in mountain regions, e.g. in the Andes, the Himalaya, or the Ethiopian highlands. Through a lens of global history, the workshop explores how and why mountain regions became a major target for international development cooperation and under what circumstances and to what ends they were construed as particular *spaces for development*. A hypothesis that the different papers can address is that international development planners perceived mountain regions – due to their topography, their economic and demographic structures – as territories with little potential for economic development, while at the same time assigning them high political importance. Particularly in the context of the stabilization of postcolonial nation-states and during the Cold War confrontations, these regions became strategically relevant and therefore meaningful for international development cooperation.

Assessing global processes of transfer and entanglement and including the idea of space as a socially constructed category, this workshop seeks to denaturalize imaginaries of development in mountain areas and to launch a critical debate on the history of development after WWII.

Some questions for discussion are:

- What characterized particular mountain areas as spaces for development and what kind of natural and cultural imaginaries were (re-)produced?
- What kind of development projects were initiated in mountain areas and who were the actors?
- In the course of development planning, how were mountain areas in industrialized and non-industrialized countries compared to each other?
- How were particular development projects related to the national self-perception of the so-called donor countries?
- How did regional and local actors influence the planning and realization of projects of international development cooperation in mountain areas?
- What kind of comparisons, transfers and entanglements existed between development programs of particular mountain areas?
- From a diachronic perspective, what kind of continuities and ruptures can be identified regarding the practice of development cooperation in mountain areas, for instance, in the context of the conservation of natural resources?

We would like to invite junior researchers who can contribute to any of the above-mentioned perspectives related to the history of development cooperation by looking into specific mountain areas in Africa, Asia, as well as Latin America.

Please send a title and an abstract of your proposal (approx. 300 words) to andrea.mueller@hist.unibe.ch by October 1, 2019. Contributions in German, English, French and Spanish are welcome. Travel and accommodation costs will be partially covered.