

## CULTURAL AFFAIRS IN (POST)COLONIAL CONTEXTS 1945-1975

### EUROPEAN CULTURAL POLICY BETWEEN RELATIONSHIP BUILDING, CIVILIZING MISSION, AND PEACEKEEPING

Where, how, and why did which European states pursue a global cultural policy after World War II? The conference aims to examine Europe's foreign cultural affairs during the era of global decolonization by questioning political motivations, cultural concepts, and colonial histories. It seeks to gain new insights into global cultural activities in the post-war period, with a strong emphasis on the actual contexts on the ground.

European expansion has fundamentally changed the world. Above all, the colonialism of the 19th century had a structural impact on the European relation to the non-Western world, and vice versa. Currently, we are witnessing intensified debates on the global role of Europe and the "West", not only in relation to the 19th century, but also regarding post-1945 developments. One of the great achievements of global history, postcolonial studies and the history of development policy is the insight, that European history cannot be separated from the history of the colonized world. Rather, one always deals with entanglements and interrelations, constantly changing according to context and time. This is also the case for the cultural-political activities of the European states after World War II. European cultural policies intensified and at the same time reoriented in this period. They represent a rich and yet hardly systematically explored research field.

The conference seeks to investigate this historical field through empirical case studies, taking into account both European cultural projects, programs and interactions as well as the local reactions and conditions on the ground in order to examine global tangled interrelations in the era of decolonization. Of interest are historical approaches focusing on the activities of one single European country, as well as comparisons of different European activities within one specific region. (The well-researched development of intra-European relationships and the extension of transatlantic resp. Soviet relations after World War II are not subject of this conference) Did Portugal, for example, culturally moderate, disrupt or ignore the late decolonization process of its former African colonies? Did the program offered by the Goethe-Institut in Damascus differ from the East German and French cultural institutes? After India's independence, what did the British Council do? What cultural policies did the Netherlands employ to consolidate their overseas possessions? Special attention is also given to the interaction between cultural, developmental, and security policies. What terms, visions, and concepts - from civilization to education to human rights - did foreign cultural policy and development policy actually share? What distinguished these two political approaches from each other?

The addressed field of cultural affairs is broad and will be spotlighted, using three questions:

- What **interests and motivations** were associated with the specific cultural policies on both sides?
- What **cultural concepts** and what old/new **thought patterns** are revealed in the specific practices?
- How did foreign cultural policy fit into each state's foreign policy? How were they **organized and related** to the national government?

The international comparative perspective offers a special opportunity to gather new knowledge about European cultural activities in the post-war period. At the same time, it may also enable us to address a more far-reaching question: Was there such a thing as a common "European style" in dealing with the young postcolonial world?

We invite submissions for 20-minute papers across the relevant fields of historical research. Please submit your abstract (around 250 words) and a brief CV in English to [sarah.bernhardt@uni-mainz.de](mailto:sarah.bernhardt@uni-mainz.de) and [jherman@uni-mainz.de](mailto:jherman@uni-mainz.de) by 15 April 2024.

The conference will be hosted by the Gutenberg International Conference Center as part of the Mainz History Talks, which is well known for organizing international academic conferences at the highest level in a relaxed but exclusive atmosphere. We invite you to discuss the multifaceted issues of European foreign cultural policy after 1945 in an intellectually stimulating and at the same time welcoming and pleasant setting.