S-106 – Technical Assistance Programs: From Instruments of Foreign Policies to Political Tools in the Hands of International Organizations

Organizers:
1) Gisela Mateos, (CEIICH-Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico), gisela.mateos@unam.mx
2) Maria Rentetzi, (Philosophy department, University of Vienna, Austria), mrentetz@vt.edu
3) Edna Suárez-Díaz, (Facultad de Ciencias -Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico), ednasuarez@ciencias.unam.mx

Abstract:
Scientific and technical cooperation among governments has been used as an instrument of foreign policy already before the Second World War. For example the first systematic U.S. technical assistance programs directed by the State Department organization known as Interdepartmental Committee on Scientific and Cultural Cooperation targeted Latin America as early as 1938. Hundreds of U.S. scientists and technical experts worked with their colleagues in Latin America to address problems in agriculture, perform research in tropical diseases, and improve statistical services among other things. In 1945 the dropping of the atomic bomb in Japan altered drastically the role of science in international politics and diplomacy. While the military invested heavily on science, and scientists permeated the highest levels of US policy, there were several other voices asking for international scientific collaboration in the field of atomic physics, the control of fissionable materials, and in a number of other scientific fields. The post war period witnessed the involvement of industrialized countries and the United Nations Specialized Agencies (through the UN Technical Assistance Board, UNTAB) in programs of technical assistance and development implemented in the Third World. Development, and underdevelopment, became entangled categories characteristic of the early Cold War period, the US foreign policies, and the growing international organizations such as WHO and IAEA. Programs of Technical Assistance went to the hands of international organizations and included a variety of activities and exchanges. Historical studies of the role played by science and technology in these programs has been scarcely studied up to now. These sessions aims to contribute a critical understanding of the shift of technical assistance from an instrument of foreign national policies to a tool for global politics, a mechanism for imposing and shaping knowledge, values, and markets, and reconfiguring local politics and culture.

Keywords: Technical Assistance – Development – Underdevelopment – Atomic energy – local and global.

Participants:
• John Dimoia
• Jessica Wang
• Edna Suarez-Diaz, Gisela Mateos
• Maria Rentetzi
• Linda Marie Richards